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**Israel Deterring Hamas
Tactical Successes, Strategic Challenges**

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Israel Deterring Hamas: Tactical Successes and Strategic Challenges

PhD Thesis in War Studies

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Abstract

Deterrence has played a large role in Israel's management of its conflict with Hamas throughout three distinct periods (1987-2000, 2000-2007, 2007-present). To accomplish deterrence against an actor that has varied in form across distinct periods with different political contexts, it has utilized myriad forms of deterrence, some of which are not part of the everyday deterrence vocabulary elsewhere. After initial instability, each of the three distinct periods has so far featured extended periods of calm following Israeli tactical shifts and the establishment of new deterrence relationships. The shifts between periods themselves, however, have led relatively stable deterrence relationships previously established to collapse or become irrelevant. Explaining these shifts and illuminating the operation of deterrence during each of these periods is an integral part of the first aim of this thesis and is a primary focus of its body chapters.

Israel's myriad tactical successes have not thus far provided a stable, enduring situation of calm. After each significant shift in the political context within which Israel and Hamas operate, both sides have had to 're-learn' deterrence. This calls into question the long-term effectiveness and stability of deterrence as a means for managing the conflict. Nevertheless, there does not currently seem to be a vision for moving beyond deterrence in some way. The conclusion contains a discussion of this and of Israel's options for bolstering deterrence in the short- to medium term and perhaps moving beyond it in the longer term.

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1. Introduction

This thesis is about Israel and Hamas. Hamas is an Islamist group founded in the late 1980s with the goal of ending Israeli control of all the territory in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Since it was founded, it has engaged in several rounds of violence against Israel and Israel has responded in myriad ways as Hamas has evolved and the political context within which it operates has changed. This thesis examines the conflict between the two through the lens of an updated conception of deterrence set out in chapter 2. In simple terms, deterrence is the attempt to forestall an attack from an opponent by threatening punishment in the form of a counter-attack if the opponent carries out its attack. Using deterrence as a lens for studying Israel and Hamas is appropriate because it has been a key tenet of Israel's approach towards Hamas since shortly after the group's founding. In fact, it can be argued that deterrence is often the most important aspect of Israel's overall approach to threats to state security in general. Some have argued that Israel follows a strategy of cumulative deterrence leading to acquiescence in Israel's existence over time. The thesis therefore asks questions about deterrence theory itself, building on the work of other scholars. Unlike the vast majority of work done on deterrence so far, it takes a 'longitudinal' (see 1.2 below) approach to the case study: observing the changes and continuities in the deterrence relationship between Israel and Hamas over the period of Hamas's entire existence.

The reason for studying Israel and Hamas over a lengthy period is that nuclear deterrence was/is expected to be absolute (if a nuclear weapon was detonated, deterrence had failed and the result was potentially so catastrophic that no learning was

possible). A key difference with non-nuclear deterrence is that it is not absolute and can thus involve rounds of escalation leading to learning via punishment. The international relations literature on deterrence has been heavily influenced by nuclear deterrence thinking and has generally omitted any mention of learning, viewing any escalation as a deterrence failure. Criminologists, however, have long accepted that learning can occur through punishment and more recent international relations scholars have begun to address this.¹ This insight demands a re-conceptualization of deterrence and has wide-ranging consequences for the understanding and study of it in practice. Other differences between nuclear and other forms of deterrence have an impact on whether more attention needs to be paid to credibility (often requiring ‘tougher’ responses) or stability (suggesting conciliation).

The following sections of this introduction will explain various types of deterrence, focusing on how traditional (mostly nuclear) conceptions of it can best be adapted to the particulars of Israel’s situation. It is important to differentiate between nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence because the requirements of each vary greatly and the practice of non-nuclear deterrence is therefore very different from that common in nuclear deterrence. Chapter 2 will use insights from more recent thought on deterrence (the so-called ‘Fourth Wave’), plus some gleaned from criminology and Israeli doctrine, to illustrate the core differences between nuclear deterrence and conventional deterrence, particularly that involving non-state actors. This ‘updated’ deterrence conception will then form the basis for analysis of deterrence in the rest of the thesis.

The differences between nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence are most consequential in two ways. The first is that non-nuclear deterrence is not absolute and allows for—even requires—learning in the form of rounds of violence. This makes

¹ Indeed, this is a pillar of most conceptions of criminal justice.

defining and assessing the success or failure of deterrence more difficult, as it is not enough simply to say that violence has occurred. The second critical difference arises from the first: Nuclear deterrence can often be pursued as a strategy, or in lieu of one, because it can create a stable status quo due to its absolute nature and the durability of the bilateral relationship(s) that arise(s) out of it. Conventional deterrence, particularly involving non-state actors like Hamas, is not absolute, stable, or inherently bilateral. This complexity and instability mean that the peaceful status quos it does create are unstable. It is thus no permanent solution on its own and can function only at the tactical level. The experience of Israel shows this tactical success: Violence from Hamas is low enough that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis has not even featured heavily in the past two Israeli elections. Deterrence has kept violence on a low flame, but has not snuffed it out altogether.

Ellie Lieberman has argued that scholars have failed properly to conceive of deterrence against non-state actors as a learning process. He argues that this has led them to take a comparative case-study approach to the investigation of deterrence and that this, in turn, has led them to misunderstand deterrence and sometimes wrongly to conclude that it does not work. Learning processes must be assessed over a lengthy period in a so-called 'longitudinal' study.² This thesis seeks to help remedy the dearth in longitudinal studies of deterrence by examining the changes and continuities in the relationship between Israel and Hamas over the entire period of Hamas's existence.

Chapter 2 examines deterrence theories in over the four so-called 'waves' of theorizing in international relations literature and analyses which portions of these theories are most appropriate to the Israel-Hamas confrontation. Criminologists have

2 Elli Lieberman, *Reconceptualizing Deterrence: Nudging Toward Rationality in Middle Eastern Rivalries*, Routledge Global Security Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012).

long considered deterrent effects on crime and have conducted studies in this regard that would be impossible in foreign affairs. The chapter therefore also takes a brief look at criminological theorizing on deterrence, specifically focusing on the ability of criminals to 'learn' to be deterred by punishment and how effective punishments for various infractions are best designed. The result is a model of deterrence used for analysis throughout the body chapters (4-6) of this thesis. Chapter 3 looks at Hamas's nature via its structure (internal vs. external leadership, political vs. military wings) as well as its *raison d'être*, and motivation and how religion has informed these. The purpose of this is to examine what effects the various factors in its nature might be expected to have on attempts to deter or coerce Hamas and what range of outcomes might be expected before this is looked at in practice in later chapters.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the main 'body' chapters of the thesis and seek to put the theory poses in chapter 2 into practice in analysing Israel's relationship with Hamas over the course two-and-a-half decades. Chapter 4 covers Hamas's birth during the first Intifada, Israel's initial responses to it, and the effects of the Oslo process on violence. It shows how Israel made use of 'indirect deterrence' and how the Oslo process made this possible. It will argue that this worked well after a slow start, bringing violence to a minimum by the late 1990s. Chapter 5 chronicles and explains the collapse of that indirect deterrence relationship and the spike in violence it caused: the Second Intifada. Partly as a result of its own actions, Israel was forced to shift tactics towards more direct methods, including targeted killing and a greater reliance on denial. It again eventually succeeded in lowering violence until Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip once again altered the situation. The period of Hamas's control of the Gaza Strip is the subject of Chapter 6 and marks a third distinct period in the deterrence relationship with Hamas.

Israel could now use tactics more akin to those used when deterring other states. Israel succeeded in establishing a new deterrence relationship with Hamas, but it has been less stable than desired. This instability and the prospects for the continued indefinite maintenance of deterrence in absence of a broader political strategy will then be discussed in the conclusion.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this thesis are twofold. The first is to show how deterrence has played a large role in Israel's management of its conflict with Hamas. To accomplish deterrence against an actor that has varied in form across distinct periods with different political contexts, it has utilized myriad forms of deterrence, some of which are not part of the everyday deterrence vocabulary elsewhere. The thesis will further identify three distinct periods in the deterrence relationship between Israel, the PA, and Hamas, with each covered in its own chapter in chapters 4 through 6. The chapters will show how the shifts between periods came about, generally as the often inadvertent result of one or more actors (Israel, the PA, and/or Hamas) making changes in reaction to the overall environment. After initial instability, each of these larger periods has so far featured extended periods of calm following Israeli tactical shifts and the establishment of new deterrence relationships. The shifts between periods themselves, however, have led relatively stable deterrence relationships previously established to collapse or become irrelevant. The collapse of the three-way relationship between Israel, the PA, and Hamas in 2000, for example, led directly to the Second Intifada. Explaining these shifts and illuminating the operation of deterrence during each of these periods is an integral part

of the first aim of this thesis.

Establishing the prevalence of deterrence in Israel's management of the conflict with Hamas and explaining and illuminating the three distinct deterrence periods will lay the ground for the second aim of this thesis. This is to show that Israel's myriad tactical successes have not thus far provided a stable, enduring situation of calm and that, after each significant shift in the political context within which Israel and Hamas are operating, both sides have had to 're-learn' deterrence. This calls into question the long-term effectiveness and stability of deterrence as a means for managing the conflict. Nevertheless, there does not currently seem to be a vision for moving beyond deterrence in some way. Interviewees for this thesis could reveal no grand strategy Israel is following other than to wait and see, with one even admitting 'you take it day by day'.³ A discussion of this, as well as Israel's options for bolstering deterrence in the short- to medium term and perhaps moving beyond it in the longer term will be the main focus of the conclusion.

1.2 Methodology

This project takes a qualitative, case-study approach, though it uses quantitative assessments as a guide to the success or failure of deterrence and other approaches Israel employs. Examples of these quantitative guides include the number of suicide or rocket attacks and their effectiveness, as measured by casualties and deaths per attack. A fall in 'effectiveness' can be a sign either of a fall in Hamas's capabilities due to Israeli or PA actions or the result of a decision by Hamas to reduce attacks' deadliness—for reasons related to deterrence or not. This underscores the need to supplement quantitative measures with an analysis of the broader context of observed changes. In

3 Israeli academic with a security background, Author interview in person, February 2013.

addition to being quantitative or qualitative, a study can also be cross-sectional (comparing similar cases or individual incidents, with each covering a short period) or longitudinal (observing the development of a case over time). The method chosen here is longitudinal, aiming to observe throughout the periods covered in the body chapters changes in both Israel's policies and in Hamas's capabilities and responses to them. Such an approach is the most appropriate because deterrence, especially the non-nuclear variety, is best seen as a learning process. A decline in violence over time that exists despite continuing tension and animosity would indicate that deterrence is working, even if occasional violence erupts. Longitudinal approaches have been rare and, as Elli Liberman argues, this is one reason why attempts to find examples of deterrence success have had mixed results.⁴

A quantitative, statistical, methodology would be inappropriate for this study for two reasons. The first is that deterrence and the factors meant to establish it can only be quantified using what would always be a subjective and spurious dichotomization into 'success' and 'failure' for deterrence and 'present' or 'not present' for the factors leading to it. The second is simply that, even if deterrence and its conditions were quantifiable, there are not enough cases to provide statistical results that could in good conscience be generalized. That said, the author's starting point was the compilation of a database of Hamas terror attacks in order to chart the rise and fall of Hamas violence over the years.⁵ These data are then combined with deeper historical analysis to understand the reasons behind the observed peaks and troughs. Such charts thus feature in each of chapters 4 through 7 to illustrate the effects, in terms of violence, from changes in deterrence relationships (the three distinct periods) and Israel's adjustment to them.

⁴ Lieberman, *Reconceptualizing Deterrence*, 29.

⁵ Charles Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks," *Database of Hamas Terror Attacks*, January 2015, www.hamasterrordatabase.com.

The author has made use of the wealth of material available on Israel's conflicts and security policies and augmented these with interviews with Israelis and experts on Israel, especially those with a background in security, in order to gain insight into Israeli thinking and interpretations of their own actions and context. The thesis examines Israeli policy towards Hamas over a longer term using deterrence theory as a conceptual guide. It uses the model of deterrence set out in chapter 2 to reinterpret existing material and generate new insights. Hamas and Israeli actions and counteractions were determined both via statements made by officials in the form of press releases and newspaper reports, as well as via third-party reports on actual actions taken on both sides, mostly from secondary sources like newswires and news services. Special care was taken while recruiting interviewees to protect their identities, if they so wished, as well as the identity of other participants. Although most participants were willing to be identified, some, especially those with links to current government institutions or possible hopes for future links, were willing to speak only anonymously. Their wishes have been respected and great care has been taken to corroborate their statements with publicly available data. None of the assertions contained within this thesis relies on the statements of any one interviewee, anonymous or otherwise, which should help to set aside potential questions about sources' reliability.

There are a number of reasons this author chose the case of Israel versus Hamas. The most important is that Hamas has changed and grown over time and, as it has done so, Israeli tactics have changed in response. This makes it possible to assess 'indirect' deterrence of a social organization with a militant wing and also of a political party and quasi-government of a quasi-state, for example; or attempts at direct deterrence of Hamas using different tactics when Hamas had different levels of state-like

characteristics. For example, Israel changed from coercion of patron states and the PA to deterrence of Hamas directly as Hamas increasingly possessed assets that Israel could hold at risk for the purposes of deterrence.⁶

Hamas's capabilities have also increased over time. Before the overthrow of Egypt's Muslim Brother President Mohamed Morsi, Hamas's legitimacy among Muslim heads of state and government had been on the rise. The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Kandil, and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak all visited Gaza in October 2012.⁷ The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was reportedly planning to visit Gaza in 2013, but cancelled that journey after support for Hamas began to decline again in the wake of President Morsi's ouster.⁸ There is no way to predict whether Hamas's current international difficulties will intensify or turn for the better, but the combination of increased strength and increased international support Hamas enjoyed for a while suggests that the prospect of eliminating Hamas outright through military action has mostly decreased over time. At the same time, Hamas's rise to power as a quasi-government that Gazans hold responsible means that it has shifted from a group that existed solely to alter the status quo to one that also has a stake in it. As deterrence is used to uphold a status quo, this is

6 Trager and Zagorcheva analyze the importance of "holding assets at risk" and illuminate the assets a state can target that may be important to a non-state actor lacking many of the targets of a state. See: Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005): 87–123.

7 Tom Perry, "Palestinian President Abbas Chides Leaders Over Gaza Visits," *NBC News*, February 6, 2013, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/50718789/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/#.UVV1RFea9hI; Haroon Siddique, Paul Owen, and Tom McCarthy, "Israel and Gaza Conflict: Truce Broken During Egyptian PM's Visit - as It Happened," *The Guardian*, November 16, 2012, sec. World news, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/16/israel-gaza-conflict-egyptian-pm-solidarity-visit-live>; "Erdogan to Visit Gaza to Confirm Israel's Promises Are Carried Out," *The Yeshiva World*, March 28, 2013, <http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/General+News/162431/Erdogan-to-Visit-Gaza-to-Confirm-Israels-Promises-are-Carried-Out.html>.

8 "Erdogan Cancels Gaza Trip After Running Afoul of Egypt Government," *www.JPost.com*, August 4, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Erdogan-cancels-Gaza-trip-after-running-afoul-of-Egypt-government-322005>; Shari Ryness, "Turkish PM Erdogan's Gaza Visit Blocked by Cairo Interim Government, Reports Egyptian Media," *European Jewish Press*, August 5, 2013, <http://www.ejpress.org/article/67459>.

significant as it should provide increased opportunities to deter Hamas. All these factors make Hamas and Israel an interesting and illuminating case study for the deterrence of non-state actors.

Studying deterrence poses methodological challenges. The thorniest is perhaps in judging its success or failure (and therefore whether it works or even exists). Declaring deterrence to have been a success is not straightforward as it relies on a counterfactual: How does one know that the level of violence (including zero violence) is lower *than it otherwise would have been*? This is made even more difficult by the adoption here of a model of deterrence that includes learning and therefore accepts that rounds of violence—which would be considered deterrence failures within non-learning conceptions—may be part of a longer-term learning process. To determine success or failure, there must first be conflict between two sides intense enough to make war plausible. Then, outright war must not be present or the level of violence must be lower than one would expect given the level of tension. For example, Patrick Morgan argues that the level of animosity between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was high enough to make the fact that they did not fight each other remarkable. ‘Each side thought the other capable of the worst behaviour, and each saw the conflict as fundamental—about basic values, the future, life and death. Each prepared extensively for a war.’⁹

This argument is attractive, but not totally convincing, especially if a posture of deterrence itself is the cause of conflict rather than something inherent in the relations between two sides. Lebow and Stein point out that the US and the USSR, having gained much in winning WWII, were status quo powers in many ways, who were more

9 Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 89 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36.

preoccupied with preventing losses than with achieving gains. In addition, ‘wars between the winners of the last great war have historically been uncommon for a lengthy period thereafter.’¹⁰ Morgan further argues that, without nuclear weapons, the distance between the US and the USSR, along with the size and power of the countries, would have made a Great Power War between them unlikely. It was the idea of a ‘cheap victory’ provided by nuclear weapons that made such a war conceivable in the first place. He concludes that the fact that they were not used under such hostile conditions, however, is remarkable and asserts that this was almost certainly due to the development of mutual deterrence thinking on both sides.¹¹

The same logic is applied to the case of Israel and Hamas. Crucially, Hamas is *not* a status quo actor (see chapter 3). Its *raison d’être* is the eventual elimination of the State of Israel and the unification of historic Mandatory Palestine. Its animosity is thus almost a given without fundamental changes to the organization’s goals and it definitely cannot be said that Israeli deterrence is the source of that animosity. Israel’s proximity to Hamas makes attacks easy and the level of hostility between them is definitely high enough for violence to break out—as it often does. Three issues then remain. The first is whether deterrence is responsible for lulls in violence or whether this can be attributed to other factors, such as a level of disruption or control so high that Hamas is unable to carry out attacks for a time or because Hamas has decided for internal reasons to refrain from attacking. The fall in suicide attacks from 2002 to 2005, for example, can largely be attributed to denial (Shin Bet and the security barrier were able to stop most of them) rather than deterrence-by-punishment.¹² On the other hand, the drop in rocket attacks

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 38–39.

¹² Daniel Byman, *A High Price : The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153.

after Cast Lead in 2009 was due to Hamas's decision to stop firing rockets after Israel announced a unilateral cease-fire.¹³ The Israel Defence Force estimated that Hamas had lost around 1,000 rockets during Cast Lead, about one-third of its inventory.¹⁴ This shows not only that Cast Lead hit Hamas hard, but that Hamas still had the capacity to return fire but refrained from doing so. This suggests deterrence and is analysed further in chapter 6.

The second issue is the cause of escalations. Each major round of escalation within the three larger periods is thus closely examined. A frequent cause observed is a steady decline in the desirability of the status quo and thus a lack of commitment on both sides to maintaining it. This is sometimes partly by design: There is a tension between maintaining deterrence now and cumulatively reducing violence over the longer term through periodic escalations. This becomes particularly salient in chapter 6 as well.

The final issue is related to the second: Is there indeed a cumulative effect from the beginning of the period studied (from 1987) to the end of 2014? Quantitative measures are used to make this assessment, but as a holistic analysis of the entire period is required, this will not be judged until the conclusion. Various questions related to Israel's deterrence of Hamas throughout the period will thus be answered in this manner, though it must be accepted that, because deterrence is unobservable by its very nature, estimations of its efficacy will always be in terms of probability rather than certainty.

13 Ibrahim Barzak and Christopher Torchia, "Israel, Hamas Cease Fire Agreed Upon," *The Huffington Post*, January 18, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/18/israel-hamas-cease-fire-a_n_158848.html.

14 Yaakov Katz and Rebecca Stoil, "'Hamas Has Dozens of Missiles with 60-Km Range.' Group Test-Fired Iranian Rocket That Can Reach Tel Aviv, Yadlin Reveals *PM: These Missiles Endanger the Whole World, but Above All, They Threaten Our Civilians and Cities," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 4, 2009, sec. News, Nexis UK.

2. Deterrence Theories

Deterrence has been one of the three ‘pillars’ in Israel’s defence doctrine since at least the founding of the modern state, the other two being advanced warning and decisiveness of victory (a fourth pillar, ‘defence’, was added around a decade ago to reflect the new possibilities afforded by missile defence systems and the security barrier).¹

The assumption is that since deterrence is bound to fail sooner or later, there will eventually be a need to recourse to military decision. In turn, the ability to achieve a battlefield decision is supposed to help rehabilitate Israel’s failed deterrence; to significantly prolong the lulls between wars; to underscore the enemy’s inability to destroy Israel or to ‘reduce it to size’; and, over the long term, even to bring about peace with the Arabs. From these points of view, military decision in a sense demonstrates Israel’s ability to stand firm: the Arabs will launch one war after the other, only to be defeated time and again until such time as they lose the taste for initiating further wars.²

Kober’s description of Israel’s military doctrine shows the prominent role deterrence plays within it. In fact, it can be argued that the second and third pillars (advanced warning and decisive victory) serve primarily to complement and enhance the first (deterrence). Advanced warning serves to alert the countries’ leaders that deterrence is about to fail, while decisive victories are meant to restore that deterrence and lead to eventual peace with the Arabs when they ‘lose the taste for initiating further wars’. At the same time, ‘advanced warning’ amounts to pre-emption: Israel is determined to attack before it is attacked. Because deterrence relies on retaliation and includes an implicit ‘conciliatory promise’ *not* to attack unless attacked, these two

1 Gabriel Freund and Saher Raz, “Defending the Nation for 65 Years,” *Israel Defense Forces*, May 30, 2013, <http://www.idf.il/1283-19078-en/Dover.aspx>; Avi Kober, “A Paradigm in Crisis? Israel’s Doctrine of Military Decision,” *Israel Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1995): 188–211, doi:10.1080/13537129508719370; Udi Dekel and Omer Einav, “Revising the National Security Concept: The Need for a Strategy of Multidisciplinary Impact,” *Insight* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, August 16, 2015), <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10318>.

2 Kober, “A Paradigm in Crisis? Israel’s Doctrine of Military Decision.”

elements of the doctrine have the potential to work at cross purposes. What brings them together, however, is the element of time as expressed in the ‘decisive victory’ portion of the doctrine: Successive failures against Israel are expected to bring about eventual Arab acquiescence. This sort of ‘cumulative deterrence’ idea, to use Bar-Joseph and Almog’s term, is unique to Israel and requires further examination.³ To do this, we first turn to a discussion of deterrence itself. In particular, how well do traditional conceptions of deterrence fit Israel’s particular situation and what sorts of adjustments might be made to improve the fit? This purpose of this chapter is to survey the literature on deterrence and generate a model that will be used for analysis throughout the rest of the thesis that combines concepts from the four ‘waves’ of deterrence theory in international relations literature with some insights from the criminological literature on deterrence. That model focuses on tactical deterrence, but the theoretical implications of ‘cumulative deterrence’ will also be examined here and the conclusion will look at Israel’s ‘cumulative deterrence’ record and probe the potential for it to continue into the future.

2.1 Nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence and the first three ‘waves’

Deterrence comes in two broad forms: deterrence-by-punishment and deterrence-by-denial. This thesis will use the words ‘defender’ and ‘opponent’ to describe the party attempting to deter and that being deterred, respectively.⁴ Deterrence-by-punishment is defined as ‘measures by one state or group of states discouraging

3 Doron Almog, “Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism,” *Parameters* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 4–19; Uri Bar-Joseph, “Variations on a Theme: The Conceptualization of Deterrence in Israeli Strategic Thinking,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 145–81.

4 This word choice is based on roles within the theoretical deterrence model and should not be construed as indicating an assumption on the author’s part that all Israel’s actions are ‘defensive’ in nature.

hostile action by another state or group of states, by arousing in the other fear of a counter action effective enough to be unacceptable to the party to which such measures are addressed'.⁵ Put simply, deterrence-by-punishment is in operation when 1) a defender issues a threat of violence should an opponent carry out a particular act and 2) the opponent responds to this threat by not carrying out that act. For example, the Israeli Chief of Staff might state that rockets from Gaza damaging property or injuring people in Israel would result in heavy retaliation. If Hamas, *in response*, prevented rocket fire, deterrence would be in effect. If a threat is made and the undesired action is carried out anyway, deterrence has not occurred. Deterrence occurs only when the opponent decides to be deterred in response to a deterrent threat. It centres on the opponent's decision, not the defender's threat. Similarly, if the opponent never planned to carry out a specified undesirable action, deterrence has also not occurred, as the opponent's action is not due to the defender's threat. Deterrence-by-punishment is an act of coercion, which accepts that both sides have choices.

Deterrence-by-denial, on the other hand, involves protecting a given target well enough that a would-be attacker decides it is not worth the effort. An example of deterrence-by-denial would be if a suicide bomber coming from the West Bank decided to travel around the West Bank security barrier rather than attempt to cross it. The security barrier is far from impregnable, but, as will be shown in chapter 5, it does often pose enough of an obstacle to cause would-be attackers to change behaviour. Such a change in behaviour is deterrence-by-denial. Deterrence-by-denial is also coercive in its effect, but that effect is achieved through control. It relies on defending (or 'controlling') a target or territory well enough, or at least giving the credible impression

⁵ Urs Schwarz and Laszlo Hadik, "Deterrence," *Strategic Terminology: A Trilingual Glossary* (London: Pall Mall, 1966), 55.

of such control, that an opponent decides not to attack or to change tactics instead.⁶ Not having to rely on retaliation may sound like a better method of preventing violence, but achieving the necessary control is frequently expensive, difficult, impossible, or simply impractical, which is why deterrence-by-punishment often remains necessary.

The evolving literature on deterrence and the four ‘waves’

A great body of literature has accumulated on deterrence over the last several decades since the end of WWII. This accumulated literature is often grouped into four ‘waves’, the first three of which were described by the third-wave theorist Robert Jervis. According to Jervis, the first two waves came in the decades immediately following the Second World War and included scholars such as Bernard Brodie (first and second waves), Thomas Schelling, and Glenn Snyder (both second wave).⁷ The theory was deductive and little attempt was made at empirical research into deterrence in the first two waves. There was not even much debate about how to establish deterrence in the first place. As Lawrence Freedman notes:

By the time it entered its most creative phase, the critical commitments had been made and the essentials of a nuclear deterrence posture had been established. There seemed to be little point to theorizing about how a strategic relationship of this sort might come to be established in the first place when the core problematic was that it existed and somehow had to be survived. Theorizing was taken to a high level of abstraction, but no attempt was made to verify its central propositions until the ‘third wave’ began in the 1970s.⁸

The sections below will examine deterrence theory in greater detail and look specifically at the insights gained from so-called ‘third wave’ authors like Jervis, George and Smoke, and Lebow and Stein, who questioned the rational actor model at the heart

6 Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), 36–37.

7 Robert Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 289–324.

8 Freedman, *Deterrence*, 22.

of deterrence and began to analyse such aspects as the paradoxical relationship between credibility and stability and how excessive focus on one could harm the other. This will be followed by insights from existing ‘fourth wave’ literature, which involves the study of deterrence against non-state actors and to which this thesis belongs. This chapter and thesis will also bring in a few insights from the criminological literature on deterrence. The modified definition of deterrence found below is taken from criminology and the ‘fourth wave’ discussion is followed by a brief section on criminological deterrence and sentencing structures. This also includes criminology’s own insights into the credibility-stability paradox, particularly in the form of an explanation of how harsh sentences may actually increase the activities one wishes to curtail by removing incentives towards moderation.

Nuclear deterrence and uncertainty

Nuclear deterrence does not apply directly to the confrontation between Israel and Hamas because, although Israel is generally believed to have nuclear weapons, they are intended for use only in the most extreme circumstances, when Israel’s very survival is threatened.⁹ Keeping them for a ‘last resort’ situation matches the usage doctrines of other nuclear powers for good reason: There are very strong international norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction in general and against nuclear weapons in particular. Israel could not use them without suffering an extensive international outcry. More importantly, however, Israel could not use nuclear weapons against Palestinians even if it wanted to. The proximity of Hamas-controlled Gaza to Israel, and of the West Bank to Israeli settlements and Israel proper, not to mention to Jewish and Muslim holy

⁹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 165.

sites, means that nuclear weapons could not be used in such places without harming Israel and Israelis themselves. Because this thesis does not focus on the use of nuclear weapons by non-state actors, arguments about the effectiveness or stability of nuclear deterrence may seem less relevant. They are not, however, because many of the same uncertainties that apply to nuclear deterrence also apply to deterrence in general. Indeed, uncertainty may be even more salient in the absence of nuclear threats.

There are long-standing criticisms of the conception of deterrence provided by second-wave scholars. These included assertions that the balance-of-terror adopted by policy makers was riddled with internal contradictions. These are summarized by Keith Payne in a recent book on America's 'gamble' with nuclear deterrence.¹⁰ Perhaps the most striking is related to the element of uncertainty, which Schelling believed was necessary for deterrence, particularly when extended to US allies. The reasoning was that opponents could never be completely certain of how the US might respond to provocation and would thus be very cautious about provoking the US in the first place. This causes difficulties when examined more closely: 'crisis decision making is said to include an unavoidable degree of uncertainty and unpredictability, with the exception of how opponents will respond to our deterrence threats; here they are certain to be prudent, cautious, and "deterrable".'¹¹

This concern with uncertainty was and still is common. In an argument for going to war against Iraq in 2002, Charles Krauthammer points out that:

We came more than once to the brink of Armageddon. In October 1962, we came to within a single misjudgement, a single miscommunication, perhaps even a single overeager fighter pilot. Had one thing gone wrong... the United States and the Soviet Union might well have reduced each other to a smoking ruin. The fact that we

¹⁰ For a discussion of Schelling's theorizing vs. American nuclear deterrence doctrine, see: Keith B Payne, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice from the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century*, Kindle edition (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2008).

¹¹ Ibid., 250.

escaped is not an argument for the stability of deterrence. It is an argument for luck. Indeed, it is an argument for trying to escape deterrence and find sturdier ground for human survival.¹²

The issue of uncertainty is arguably even more important for types of deterrence that do not involve nuclear weapons. As Kenneth Waltz put it, ‘nuclear weapons make military miscalculation difficult and politically pertinent prediction easy.’¹³ This is because conventional ‘[w]ars start more easily because the uncertainties of their outcomes make it easier for the leaders of states to entertain illusions of victory at supportable cost. In contrast, contemplating war when the use of nuclear weapons is possible focuses one’s attention not on the probability of victory but on the possibility of annihilation.’¹⁴ Waltz believes that the possibility—even a fairly distant one—of annihilation, instead of the probability (even if much greater than the possibility of annihilation) of merely a humiliating defeat, make nuclear deterrence more stable and reliable. It also gives rise to the expectation that deterrence can be absolute. After all, it was argued during the Cold War that a single strategic nuclear explosion could cause the end of civilization as we knew it. The desire to avoid this on both sides meant that nuclear deterrence, solely because of the power of nuclear weapons, could be, and *had* to be, absolute. This proposition is logical, and if it is correct, the implication is that non-nuclear deterrence is not absolute and therefore less stable and reliable. Because deterrence failures when nuclear weapons are not involved are less catastrophic, we may expect them to occur more often. This also has an impact on the issues of credibility and uncertainty. Without the certainty of calculation provided by the prospect of mutual assured destruction, it becomes possible for an adversary like Hamas to test Israel and

12 Charles Krauthammer, “The Obsolescence of Deterrence,” *The Weekly Standard*, December 9, 2002, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/001/964dzkuf.asp?page=3>.

13 Kenneth Waltz, “Toward Nuclear Peace,” in *Realism and International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 262.

14 Kenneth Neal Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” in *Realism and International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 280.

perhaps even to believe in the attainability of victory at a 'supportable cost'.¹⁵ The uncertainty also necessitates more careful analysis of an adversary's capability and credibility. The thorny issue of credibility is discussed in more detail below.

Rationality

Talk of uncertainty, calculation, and credibility suggests that deterrence works by affecting an opponent's cost calculus. This throws up questions about rationality because carefully weighing the costs and benefits of prospective courses of action is something that actors will not do if they are completely irrational. This applies to the deterrence of state- and non-state actors alike and thus must not be ignored. Deductive approaches to studying deterrence have assumed rationality because such an assumption is 'productive'. While this is helpful for devising the theory of deterrence, Thomas Schelling himself admitted when he put forth his theory that '[w]hether the resulting theory provides good or poor insight into actual behaviour is... a matter for subsequent judgement'.¹⁶

Robert Pape argues convincingly that even groups that use suicide terrorism act according to strategic logic and that their actions are not what one would expect were they irrational or guided only by religious fanaticism. He lists three reasons for this:

1. Timing. Nearly all suicide attacks occur in organized, coherent campaigns, not as isolated or randomly timed incidents.
2. Nationalist goals. Suicide terrorist campaigns are directed at gaining control of what the terrorists see as their national homeland, and specifically at ejecting foreign forces from that territory.
3. Target selection. All suicide terrorist campaigns in the last two decades have been aimed at democracies, which make more suitable targets from the terrorists' point of view. Nationalist movements that face non-democratic opponents have not resorted to suicide attack as a means of coercion.¹⁷

15 A term used in: Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities."

16 Thomas C Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University, 1980), 4.

Statements by those close to organizations that have used (here suicide) terrorism reinforce this assertion of strategic logic. One oft-cited example is a comment made by Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, who was widely considered to have had a decisive ideological influence on Hezbollah, in *Monday Morning*, a Lebanese newspaper, in 1985: ‘We believe that suicide operations should only be carried out if they can bring about a political or military change in proportion to the passions that incite a person to make of his body an explosive bomb.’¹⁸ The economist Bryan Caplan suggests that the confusion stems from different definitions of rationality. He reasons that a willingness to commit suicide defies the expectation that a person will act according to narrow self-interest. He argues that even suicide terrorists respond to incentives, however, and one must focus on that aspect of rationality when attempting to understand terrorism.¹⁹ Just because someone is willing to die for a cause does not mean that person would be willing to die for a cause that had no chance of succeeding.

Schelling defines rationality as ‘behaviour motivated by a conscious calculation of advantages, a calculation that in turn is based on an explicit and internally consistent value system’.²⁰ The idea of acting according to a ‘value system’ adds flexibility to a conception of rationality: A person or group may value political goals over survival and may consider fighting more important than winning, for example. Deterrence based on such rationality also accepts that there will be difficulty in understanding an opponent’s value system clearly enough to be able to influence his cost calculus. If rationality is limited in predictable ways, it is still possible for deterrence theory to tell us something

17 Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Kindle edition (New York: Random House, 2005), 266.

18 Martin Kramer, “The Moral Logic of Hizballah (Hizbullah) (Hezbollah),” *Martinkramer.org*, accessed March 28, 2013, <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/MoralLogic.htm>.

19 Bryan Caplan, “Terrorism: The Relevance of the Rational Choice Model,” *Public Choice* 128, no. 1–2 (July 21, 2006): 91–107, doi:10.1007/s11127-006-9046-8.

20 Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 4.

if these ideas are incorporated. In addition, nuclear deterrence theory is even generally seen as requiring a certain degree of irrationality to function.

Patrick Morgan suggests a few possibilities for how the assumption of rationality could be loosened in ways that are comprehensible, even if their outcomes remain unpredictable. Furthermore, this 'loosened rationality' could even strengthen deterrence. One possibility is that a deterring government may act irrationally in crisis situations 'because it might be so angry, frightened, or lacking in control that it would do' things a completely rational actor would not.²¹ As he and others have pointed out, however, this assumes a lopsided rationality in which the deterrer can be irrational but the attacker will respond to this rationally. This was partially resolved simply by saying that governments '*are rational about the fact that they can be irrational*'.²² Morgan concludes, however, that this is not much help in deciding whether deterrence will work, only in explaining why deterrence does work when it does, thereby failing to fulfil the prescriptive role desired for the theory.

Jervis, Lebow, and Stein investigate some of the ways in which actors are less than rational when responding to deterrence threats. They argue that unmotivated biases (limits in our ability to process and make sense of information) and motivated biases (stemming from a 'subconscious need to see the world in certain ways') affect the decisions leaders make.²³ For example, Lebow's analysis of cases of deterrence suggests that internal or domestic factors weigh heavily on the perceptions of leaders.²⁴ Daniel Byman hints at this when he suggests that groups like Fatah were intimidated by Israel

21 Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 89 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54.

22 Ibid., 55.

23 Robert Jervis, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, Perspectives on Security (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 25.

24 See for example: Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, Perspectives on Security (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 89–124.

but that this could not overcome inter-factional competition between Fatah and other groups and possibly within Fatah itself. Attacking Israel was the only way to attract recruits and support.²⁵ Lebow uses the example of the Falklands war, suggesting that ‘the [Argentinian] generals were to a great extent the prisoners of passions they themselves had helped to arouse and to which they had subsequently become increasingly vulnerable by virtue of their faltering legitimacy.’²⁶ Special attention will thus be paid within this thesis to Israel’s attention to ‘push’ factors behind attacks (actions that stem from internal pressures rather than those motivated by external opportunities to attack). This is not because they are necessarily *more* important than ‘pull’ factors, but because Lebow and Stein have shown that deterrers may pay too much attention to their own credibility and not enough to push factors (i.e. the stability or sustainability of a deterrence status quo), contributing to suboptimal outcomes.

In the meantime, it is useful to point out that concluding that human beings are not entirely rational is not to conclude that they are *irrational*. The fact that deterrers and opponents are subject to biases and internal pressures may complicate the practice of deterrence, but little in the third-wave literature demonstrates irrationality, nor is there any proposed practical substitute for the rational actor model. More careful attention to the potential forces acting on decision makers may explain many cases of deterrence failure. Returning to Lebow’s example of the Falkland’s War, he concludes that ““defensive avoidance,” an attempt by British policy makers to shield themselves from threatening realities which they were unprepared for and unable to face’ may explain the failure of British intelligence to see the warnings that the Argentinians were

25 Daniel Byman, *A High Price : The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62.

26 Lebow, “Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War,” 109.

likely to invade the Falklands.²⁷ As he himself points out, however, ‘there are almost always trade-offs to be made between escalation and passivity in pre-crisis or crisis situations’. As he also notes, Britain was in the middle of extensive and often unpopular budget cuts. Starting an expensive naval operation in the South Atlantic at such of time would have caused anger. If it had successfully bolstered deterrence, it would also have appeared unnecessary, since successful deterrence is a non-event. It would also have seemed unnecessarily aggressive, inviting condemnation from countries around the world sympathetic to Argentina and harming British relations with the United States, which was trying to improve its own relations with the Argentinians. Successfully bolstering deterrence would therefore likely have harmed the Thatcher government both politically and electorally. On the other hand, if the attempt to bolster deterrence failed to deter, it could have come to be seen as the provocative *catalyst* of an Argentine invasion itself. This would have been equally harmful politically and electorally. Taken together with the fact that the Argentinians had often bluffed in the past about the Falklands and Britain’s reluctance to act in advance becomes logical: Successful or not, bolstering deterrence could have lost the government the next elections, caused problems with its allies, and ending up with it receiving the blame for the crisis that followed.

The lessons from all this for this thesis are clear. Hamas is clearly subject to internal pressures. Its *raison-d’etre* is to return Palestine to Arab Muslim control, so any attempt to force it to give up on that goal amounts to a choice between being attacked by Israel and forfeiting its entire purpose and existence. Hamas will always almost certainly choose the former, though fudges and compromises may be found (such as ‘temporarily’ accepting the pre-1967 borders and allowing a referendum on recognizing

²⁷ Ibid., 103.

Israel that would not require Hamas itself to do so). Hamas also consists of several groups, many of them acting independently from one another and with interests that are not always in alignment (see chapter 3). For example, ending the blockade of Gaza may be a desirable political goal for Hamas's political leadership, but the resultant loss of income from smuggling tunnels would hit Hamas's military wing, the Qassam Brigades, making ending the blockade less desirable for the portion of Hamas that directly controls the weapons (see chapter 6).²⁸ A threat to the survival of all or part of Hamas would constitute a 'push' factor making escalation more likely. None of this means Hamas is not rational or deterrable, but it does mean that deterring Hamas is complicated and that 'push' factors are significant. These push factors mean that Hamas can be backed into a corner, so to speak, making it the kind of 'highly motivated' actor that George and Smoke determined may undermine deterrence by 'designing around' threats and red lines.²⁹ This can be a key issue: Attacks problematic for Israel that nonetheless fall outside or on the grey edges of its red lines feature frequently in chapter 6, particularly as regards rocket launches and the construction of tunnels.

Absolute nuclear vs. restrictive non-nuclear deterrence

Deterrence of Hamas is not absolute and a model of deterrence that expects it to be is a poor fit. Without the destructive power of nuclear weapons, violent escalations become less than a struggle for life or death. Nuclear deterrence was expected to be absolute. The detonation of a single nuclear weapon could spark massive retaliation. This prospect was so horrifying that any such detonation would be perceived as a failure

28 This may be less of an issue now, as few, if any, smuggling tunnels to Egypt now remain: "Anatomy of a Gaza Smuggling Tunnel," *Al Jazeera English*, 2015, http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2015/gaza_tunnels/tunnel.html.

29 Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), 543.

of deterrence and was to be avoided. In a situation in which nuclear weapons do not apply, the criminological idea of deterrence is a better fit: Deterrence is meant to reduce the number of crimes committed; it is not expected to eliminate crime altogether. An alternative definition of deterrence from criminology is thus: 'the omission or curtailment of criminal activity by an individual in whole or in part because the individual perceives the omission or curtailment as reducing the risk that someone will be punished as a response to the activity'.³⁰ 'Someone' here refers to '(1) the individual, (2) another person who stands in some special social relation to the individual, and/or (3) a group of other such persons'.³¹ This definition thus allows for vicarious or collective punishment and is better than the one above for two reasons. The first is that it allows for the reality that deterrence does not have to be absolute in order to be useful. The second is that it includes perception and focuses more on the deterred party than the deterrer. This difference may seem slight, but it is significant because deterrence relies on the *target* of deterrence deciding to be deterred. Focusing solely on the threats, capabilities, and will of the defender is inadequate as all of these factors may fail to impress the opponent. This thesis will use a restrictive, rather than absolute, conception of deterrence throughout.

The destructive power of nuclear weapons also simplifies the definition of success: It is absolute. If nuclear bombs explode, deterrence has failed. If they do not, deterrence has supposedly succeeded. In a nuclear context, then, limited (non-nuclear) wars can be viewed as cases of tacit bargaining even as deterrence remains successful overall from the viewpoint that nuclear annihilation has not occurred.³² Assessing the

30 Jack Gibbs, *Crime, Punishment, and Deterrence* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 1975), 39.

31 Ibid., 32.

32 Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 10.

success of deterrence without absolute devastation as a threat must rely on the level of violence being lower than it otherwise would have been. Determining this requires looking at cycles of violence and relative calm more closely to assess their causes and weigh these against each other in what can only ever be a probabilistic manner. This is the aim of chapters 4-6 of this thesis.

Symmetric vs. asymmetric, bilateral vs. multilateral

Further aspects of the nuclear deterrence model make calculation easier, but those aspects unfortunately do not apply to non-nuclear deterrence. Nuclear deterrence relationships between opponents are inherently symmetrical and bilateral. This is because, except in very extreme cases, the number of nuclear weapons each side possesses is essentially irrelevant. Beyond a certain low level, adding additional nuclear weapons makes no real difference in relative destructive capability. If 100 nuclear missiles are enough to completely destroy an enemy (and are safe from a first strike), then having thousands of them cannot add any additional value.³³

This symmetry also tended to make much of nuclear deterrence inherently bilateral. Just as having additional nuclear weapons beyond a certain low level does not provide their owner with any additional power, adding additional members to an alliance does not do much to change the power relationship. Any one opponent has the power to cause unacceptable damage—if they act together, this does not change.³⁴ This is not the case for Israel and Hamas, who each navigate a web of multilateral relationships and can gain considerably in diplomatic terms by increasing the number of allies they have. This means Israel must focus on several parallel ‘games’ on multiple

³³ Ibid., 8.

³⁴ Ibid.

levels.³⁵

The symmetry and inherent bilateral nature of nuclear deterrence also mean that there is less need for precise intelligence on an opponent's capabilities. It is enough for both sides to assume that the other side has the capability to inflict unacceptable damage. This simplifies the relationship considerably and makes miscalculation, at least as far as capability is concerned, unlikely. As Kenneth Waltz put it, 'nuclear weapons make military miscalculation difficult and politically pertinent prediction easy.'³⁶ The fact that the relationship between Israel and Hamas is far from symmetrical paradoxically makes the situation for Hamas and Israel more like that of nuclear deterrence in this important aspect: Hamas does not have to work hard to assess Israel's capabilities (as distinct from its willingness to use them—its 'credibility') because of the latter's clear superiority.

Stability vs. credibility

The issues of stability and credibility are important because a lack of either will cause deterrence to fail. Moreover, the two must be finely balanced, as too much of one will tend to undermine the other. Here, too, there are differences between nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence. According to some scholars, the absolute nature of nuclear weapons simplifies calculation in nuclear deterrence by making credibility less of an issue. 'Contemplating war when the use of nuclear weapons is possible focuses one's attention not on the probability of victory but on the possibility of annihilation.'³⁷ Just because one side is not sure its opponent is willing to use nuclear weapons does not mean that it will be willing to risk annihilation to find out, especially since the

35 Shmuel Bar, Author interview in person, February 27, 2013.

36 Waltz, "Toward Nuclear Peace," 262.

37 Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," 280.

probability of the use of nuclear weapons increases as an opponent's position becomes more dire. Even a 10% probability of an entire country being wiped off the face of the earth is too high a probability to gamble with. Because neither Israel nor Hamas are immediately threatened with total annihilation, they must engage in more complex calculations of credibility and likely gains and losses, with more opportunities for miscalculation making periodic bursts of violence more likely. On the other hand, some assert that credibility is *less* of an issue without nuclear weapons. This is because of the irrationality of deciding to respond to an attack with nuclear weapons at any stage if this is expected to initiate a nuclear counter-attack that will destroy both countries. As Patrick Morgan points out, conventional (non-nuclear) deterrence does not suffer this issue, making escalation credible at any stage.³⁸

Perhaps the most important effect that multipolarity and issues of credibility have is that they complicate calculation. To use Shimshoni's term, the parties involved in a deterrence relationship must possess a certain degree of 'common knowledge'. 'Before a defender communicates threats he must devise them, and to do this appropriately he must understand his challenger's available strategies and valuation of war objectives and costs.'³⁹ All of this means that deterrence with conventional weapons is more difficult to establish and maintain. In addition, while there is little that can change the inherently symmetrical and bilateral relationship between two sides using nuclear deterrence, the situation among parties, possibly several of them, in a conventional context can change continuously, bringing with it new assessments of capabilities and goals. These assessments may sometimes take shape during periodic 'limited wars'. Shimshoni also asserts that 'limited war can serve as a bargaining tool

38 Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 19.

39 Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 6.

between nuclear powers.’ There is no reason, however, that such bargaining cannot occur in a non-nuclear context as well, as Schelling has illuminated.⁴⁰ As capabilities, including those of alliance partners, shift, one side or the other may attempt to test its boundaries.

Many scholars, like Morgan and Payne, assert that nuclear deterrence has a serious credibility problem. As Morgan summarizes: ‘Retaliation against a nuclear-armed state... might set off a nuclear war and *cancel the future*—your society and state could disappear. There would be no point to retaliating to prevent future attacks.’⁴¹ Not all authors agree with this assessment, but the main point for this thesis lies in the differing *sources* of the credibility problem. With nuclear weapons, capabilities are scarcely part of the equation. The capability to back a threat is made credible by the possession of enough nuclear weapons (and the means to deliver them) to cause unacceptable damage to the opponent.⁴² It is the *will* to use those weapons to retaliate in the face of attack that is questionable. When nuclear weapons are absent, the question is not just whether the defender has the *will* to carry out a threat, but also whether it has the capability to do so. In spite of the fact that the situation between Israel and Hamas does not involve any nuclear threat, however, Israel’s capabilities are scarcely in question due to the overwhelming asymmetry between it and Hamas. Israel is therefore like the United States or the Soviet Union in the Cold War in the sense that its capability is not in question. It must convince Hamas that it is *willing* to take action. This is something Israel constantly strives to show.⁴³

In the run-up to the 2008-9 Gaza War (referred to here by the name of Israel’s

40 Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 6.

41 Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 19 (emphasis in original).

42 Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities.”

43 For example, concerns about Israel’s credibility, specifically its willingness to use force, have come up in the majority of interviews the author has conducted with experts on Israeli security thinking.

military operation in that war: 'Cast Lead'), the spokesman of Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, said that Israel had not yet invaded the Gaza Strip, despite numerous rocket launches into Israel, because the 'Zionists military commander or political cannot afford results of a decision as big as the invasion of the Gaza Strip, especially the feel of defeat, failure and disappointment are still fresh to them after the war in Lebanon.' Israelis seem to accept that this was not just tough talk, and frequently discussed the need to regain or maintain credibility.⁴⁴

Other policy makers in other conflicts have concentrated too heavily on credibility, however. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Lebow and Stein show that President Kennedy's concerns about credibly showing resolve were misplaced. Khrushchev twice denied Castro's request to base nuclear missiles in Cuba out of the belief that Kennedy would sink or stop the ships transporting the missiles—there is no sign that he questioned US resolve. Lebow and Stein show further that, rather than helping resolve the crisis, the unnecessary attempts to show resolve were instead interpreted as displays of aggression, which themselves required a tough response. According to this line of reasoning, the Cuban Missile Crisis came about at least in part because of misplaced concerns about credibility stemming from the practice of deterrence, though the horrifying thought of war did, in the end, convince both sides to find a way to step back from the brink. The whole crisis might have been avoided altogether, however, had Kennedy been less concerned with credibility and more willing to conciliate.⁴⁵ In a separate article, Lebow adds: 'In retrospect, it is apparent that

44 The majority of those interviewed by the author believed Israel's enemies may sometimes view its threats as incredible. Israeli authors have also made similar a case, see, for example: Jacob Amidror, "Israel's Strategy for Combating Palestinian Terror," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 2002, 118; Shmuel Bar, "Deterring Terrorists," *Policy Review*, no. 149 (June 2, 2008), <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/5674>.

45 Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

American concern for resolve, in theory and practice, bordered on the neurotic.⁴⁶

This focus on credibility can have consequences for stability. As Morgan points out: 'If the point is to deter an attack, and stability rests on each side being confident it can deter, then one side's determined effort to gain the capacity to fight and win for the sake of credibility will breed deterrence instability.'⁴⁷ This applies to situations of symmetrical, mutual deterrence, but Israel's vast superiority over Hamas does not mean it is willing to seek conflict with Hamas at any given time. In seeking periods of quiet, during which Hamas is deterred, Israel must implicitly agree to maintain its own quiet. Deterrence is therefore to a certain extent always mutual. Just as attempts to shore up credibility can undermine stability, however, a long period of stable deterrence could undermine credibility by making the prospect of escalation and retaliation appear more distant. This amounts to a sort of credibility-stability paradox.

There are, of course, vast differences between the case of the US vs the USSR and that of Israel vs Hamas (geographic proximity and size, territorial goals that are quite often fully competitive, and the fact that nuclear weapons do not factor here, to name just three). Israel does also focus on the credibility of its threats, however. This is rather striking in light of its vast superiority when compared to Hamas. It is possible that domestic and international restrictions on Israeli action cause Hamas to question Israel's will to use its overwhelming force, and this will be explored in more detail later. In general, however, it must be said that few would question Israel's will to retaliate fiercely for attacks on its citizens. Both its capabilities and its credibility are generally strong and seen to be so. There has not been enough discussion of how some of Israel's attempts to show toughness may be unnecessary or even harmful, however. 'When

46 Richard Ned Lebow, "Deterrence: Then and Now," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 5 (October 2005): 768.

47 Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 52.

leaders become desperate, they behave aggressively even though the military balance is unfavourable and they have no grounds to doubt their adversary's resolve. When leaders are motivated by need, deterrence and compellence can... intensify the pressures on leaders to act, make the costs of inaction unbearable, and inadvertently provoke the kind of behavior they are designed to prevent.⁴⁸ In other words, an opponent like Hamas can be made so desperate through push factors designed to shore up credibility that deterrence stability is undermined. Finally, while nuclear deterrence has been remarkably stable over the past seven decades, Israel's deterrence of Hamas has not. Stability has thus been a major issue and, since attempts to shore up credibility can undermine stability, it is reasonable to ask whether Israel might be focusing too heavily on the former to the detriment of the latter.

Benedetta Berti of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies hints at this when she mentions that 'in the last two rounds [Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9 and Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012], it has become increasingly difficult to say who started it.' She suggests that Israel's targeted killing of Ahmed Jabari was what led to the escalation that culminated in Pillar of Defence, while the targeted killing was itself a case of Israel responding to increased rocket launches from Gaza.⁴⁹ If both sides see the other as initiating challenges, then both sides see themselves as defenders. Bargaining theorists expect defenders to be more motivated than challengers, all other things being equal.⁵⁰ If *both* sides see themselves as the defender, then *both* sides will be highly motivated not to back down. Furthermore, once a crisis has begun, stopping it becomes an issue of compellence rather than deterrence as one side or both must then back down—publicly. As will be argued in more detail below, compellence brings with it issues of

48 Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, 321.

49 Benedetta Berti, Author interview in person, February 20, 2013.

50 Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, 316.

honour, face-saving, and humiliation. If both sides view themselves as defenders, this problem is intensified. All in all, too little attention has been paid in the literature to the split between deterrence and compellence and the impact this has on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (and therefore could have on many other conflicts throughout the world). This will be a major focus of this thesis.

2.2 Insights from the ‘fourth wave’ and criminology literatures; indirect deterrence; deterrence vs. compellence

The third wave of theorizing provided a helpful complement to the deductive deterrence theories set out in the first two waves. Its focus was still on deterrence between two or more state actors, however, meaning it does not fit perfectly with the situation between Israel and Hamas. Jeffrey Knopf therefore identifies an emerging ‘fourth wave’ of deterrence theory arising to tackle questions surrounding the deterrence of non-state actors by states.⁵¹ Thomas Rid has noted that some aspects of deterring non-state actors resemble activities by law enforcement agencies (indeed, terrorism within a country’s own territory, at least, is generally treated as a law enforcement issue). This section thus includes a look at some of the criminology literature on deterrence, especially the insights of the 19th century scholar Cesare Beccaria, whose seminal work *On Crimes and Punishments* was the first to place criminal justice in a utilitarian light (i.e. to ponder whether punishments could deter crime to the benefit of the greater good rather than simply providing an outlet for society’s drive for revenge).

⁵¹ Jeffrey Knopf, “The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 1 (April 19, 2010): 1–33.

Fourth wave deterrence research

What insights does the literature on the deterrence of non-state actors bring?

This form of deterrence seems often to have either been overlooked, because it did not fit the balance-of-terror paradigm, or doubted, as nuclear weapons could scarcely be used against non-state actors with no obvious targets to hold at risk. It is notable that deterrence has usually continued to be associated, in the end, with nuclear weapons.

George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry, and Sam Nunn all co-wrote an article for the Wall Street Journal in which they state ‘In today’s war waged on world order by terrorists, nuclear weapons are the ultimate means of mass devastation. And non-state terrorist groups with nuclear weapons are conceptually outside the bounds of a deterrent strategy and present difficult new security challenges.’⁵² Robert Pape stated his scepticism, noting ‘future... anti-American terrorists may be equally willing [as the 9/11 attackers] to die, and so not deterred by fear of punishment or of anything else’.⁵³ Even Kenneth Waltz, who is a strident and well-known proponent of deterrence and promoter of the idea of nuclear peace, apparently does not believe this applies to non-state actors: ‘The difficulty is if irregular groups, terrorists, get control of weapons of mass destruction. [...]Then they are not deterrable. We’ve always known that deterrence does not cover this kind of situation.’⁵⁴

Some authors, like Knopf, Lupovici, Rid, and, briefly, Freedman, have addressed deterrence and non-state actors who practice terrorism as part of the ‘fourth wave’ of deterrence theory. Much of the work on deterring non-state actors is about Israel and/or written by Israelis, who work on the belief that certain types of such actors can be

52 George P. Shultz et al., “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007, A15.

53 Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, 5.

54 Kenneth Waltz, “Conversation with Kenneth N. Waltz, P. 6 of 7,” *Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley*, 2003, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Waltz/waltz-con6.html> (emphasis added).

deterred in certain situations. That so much of the work comes from Israel is unsurprising considering Israel's long and constant history of dealing with non-state threats. One piece on Israel is Daniel Byman's seminal book on the history of Israeli counter-terrorism. Though not a work on deterrence, Byman makes frequent references to Israeli deterrence of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah failing, being restored, or being maintained. He therefore obviously accepts that this is possible. The deterrence narrative within the book is also coherent and plausible, though he does not explicitly discuss the dynamics of terrorist tactics and deterrence.⁵⁵

Shmuel Bar also shows that deterrence can work against non-state actors in his article studying this subject using the case of Hezbollah. Interestingly, he notes that Israeli policy makers make an important distinction: 'It is a widely held view in Israeli defence and security circles that terrorist organizations per se lack the organizational characteristics and assets that can be threatened in order to achieve deterrence, but as they develop social, political, or state-like manifestations, they become more susceptible to deterrence. Therefore, the mainstream of Israel's policy toward terrorism was based primarily on disruption and preemption.'⁵⁶ When such social, political, or 'state-like' targets were lacking, Israel has relied on 'indirect deterrence' of terror groups' state backers; in the case of Hezbollah this referred primarily to Syria and Iran.⁵⁷

The term 'indirect deterrence' is somewhat misleading, however, as the final target may not actually be *deterred* at all. What a state attempting 'indirect deterrence' must actually do is attempt to coerce, often via *compellence*, another actor to stop or

55 Byman, *A High Price*.

56 Shmuel Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah," *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (2007): 469, doi:10.1080.

57 First mentioned in 1998 with reference to nuclear deterrence situations, Shmuel Bar has adapted the concept to deterrence of non-state actors. See: Robert E. Harkavy, "Triangular or Indirect Deterrence/compellence: Something New in Deterrence Theory?," *Comparative Strategy* 17, no. 1 (January 1998): 63–81, doi:10.1080/01495939808403132; Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah," 471.

curb the target group's activity. How that actor influences the target group is not necessarily by deterrence, but this is secondary. The fact that 'indirect' deterrence often employs compellence is important because compellence is commonly argued to be more difficult than deterrence (thus providing one explanation for why indirect deterrence has proved difficult, see chapter 4), largely because compliance with a compellent demand is more blatant and carries with it the humiliation of bowing to pressure from another party. Deterrence, moreover, has clear limits, whereas complying with a compellent demand may attract further demands for concessions that would undermine the party's credibility and therefore its ability to deter.⁵⁸ Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal himself has noted this phenomenon: Negotiations conducted during a period of weakness 'lead only to surrender in the face of a dominant enemy... lowering the ceiling of demands and political discussions'.⁵⁹ Many authors have failed to highlight adequately the difference between deterrence and compellence. In one article, Bar mentions compellence only together with deterrence, as if the two were essentially one tactic; in another, he makes no mention of compellence at all.⁶⁰ Thomas Rid, Jacob Amidror, and Doron Almog also make no mention of the word 'compellence' in some of their important articles.⁶¹

This study will focus more on correctly categorizing policies as deterrence or compellence and analysing the effects this difference can have on outcomes. It is often difficult to differentiate between the two, but this is itself extremely important: If it is at times unclear whether Israel is attempting to maintain the status quo (deterrence) or change it (compellence), it is easy to understand how both sides can see themselves as

58 Freedman, *Deterrence*, 110.

59 Khaled Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS* (London: MEMO Publishers, 2013), 21.

60 Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah"; Bar, "Deterring Terrorists."

61 Thomas Rid, "Deterrence Beyond the State: The Israeli Experience," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (April 2012); Amidror, "Israel's Strategy for Combating Palestinian Terror"; Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism."

defenders and both be unwilling to back down without significant escalation.⁶² This thesis will thus place emphasis on the interplay between deterrence and compellence and the role played by the latter, in particular, in repeated escalation.

Israel's experience with indirect deterrence shows there are challenges to compelling states that go beyond the difficulties just mentioned. Israel experienced only limited success when attempting to deter Hezbollah indirectly via Iran, Syria, and the Lebanese Government. According to Bar, the first reason for this was that Iran, the most important supporter of Hezbollah, was powerful enough to deter Israel from trying to compel it. The second was that Syria, which acted primarily as a conduit for Iranian support, has come to rely more on Hezbollah than the other way around. Finally, attempts to coerce the Lebanese Government have tended to fail due to the weakness of that government and its inability to influence the situation on its southern border.⁶³

This is not only a question of the type or level of force that can be brought to bear, as Thomas Schelling notes that even nuclear deterrence is not always successful. Some of this may have to do with communication and credibility. He notes, 'The North Koreans were not deterred in 1950. There is some hint that the North Koreans or their Soviet mentors took seriously a US diplomatic statement that seemed to leave Korea out of the declared US area of responsibility; still, they knew they were facing US nuclear weapons.' The same applies to the North Vietnamese.⁶⁴ The ability to endure hardship stands on the opposite side of the deterrence equation from the level of force a state attempting to compel is willing and able to bring to bear. This ability is beyond the

62 The Cuban Missile Crisis is once again instructive, as both sides saw themselves as defenders of the status quo even as the situation blurred between deterrence and compellence. Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*.

63 Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah."

64 Thomas Schelling, "Foreword," in *Deterring Terrorism Theory and Practice*, ed. Andreas Wenger and Alex Wilner (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2012).

compeller's control and is difficult or impossible to assess in advance, but cannot be left unaddressed.⁶⁵ This latter point mirrors the difficulties Israel at times faced in attempting to compel the Palestinian Authority (PA) to crack down on Hamas.

Interestingly, Bar illustrates that Israel has had more success in deterring Hezbollah directly, presumably due to Hezbollah's ample 'state-like' characteristics—it administers something that in many aspects resembles a state in southern Lebanon. Critically, he asserts that deterrence failures in the case of Hezbollah were due to a failure on Israel's part to communicate properly where it had drawn 'red lines', which, if crossed, would spark heavy retaliation (an offshoot of George and Smoke's 'design around' problem). 'A number of cases of confrontation between Israel and Hizballah brought [Hizballah's leader] to the conclusion that the real Israeli deterrence was much lower than the objective Israeli capability.'⁶⁶ Therefore, 'Hizballah did not challenge Israeli deterrence—as it saw it—in its decision to abduct Israeli soldiers in July 2006. Israel had given it no reason to believe that such an act would no longer be considered within the rules of the game.'⁶⁷ He backs this by noting 'Nassrallah's contrite appearance on al-Manar [a Lebanese satellite television station affiliated with Hezbollah] after the war, in which he claimed that had he believed that there was even one percent of a possibility that Israel would react as it did and wreak destruction in Lebanon, he would not have ordered the operation'.⁶⁸ He also argues that Hezbollah did not believe Israel's threats to respond with 'high-intensity deterrence', in part due to such issues as public and media discussions in Israel of the domestic and international cost of a heavy retaliation. Like the example in the run-up to Operation Cast Lead

65 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Kindle edition (Oxford: Acheron Press, 2012) Book 1, Chapter 1.

66 Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah," 484.

67 Ibid., 487.

68 Ibid., 483.

mentioned above, this shows that credibility remains an issue for Israel, even if stability may often be a bigger one.

One issue brought up by Bar that could have ramifications for deterrence was his conclusion that there were ‘very few occasions where terrorist leaders were in firm control over the violence orchestrated by their followers’.⁶⁹ Since deterrence (especially of the non-nuclear variety) requires very careful communication of threats and ‘red lines’, a lack of control over the organization could lead to it crossing red lines by accident. Alternatively, this could be used as cover for crossing them intentionally, complicating decision making for the defender. Bar also notes that there are ‘two “entities” that are usually overlooked in accounts of classical interstate deterrence [and] must be addressed...: The “host state” and the “patron state”’.⁷⁰ Beyond patron states, there is a further question: To what extent do non-state groups use the international community to exert pressure on target states? This is an important and constant issue for Israel that will be addressed in the latter chapters of this thesis, in particular.

Regarding the central control of non-state groups’ members, there is some disagreement among Israeli experts about Hamas’s command structure. One expert with a security background stated that Hamas’s chain of command was strong, with the ‘political leaders’ in firm control (though not specifying *which* political leaders).⁷¹ Bar, who also has a security background, asserted that there were multiple ‘Hamases’ with often competing interests and that the external leadership still had more power than the internal.⁷² This conflicts with reports in the media that have tended to suggest that the

69 Shmuel Bar, “Deterrence of Palestinian Terrorism: The Israel Experience,” in *Deterring Terrorism Theory and Practice*, ed. Andreas Wenger and Alex Wilner (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2012), 206.

70 Ibid., 207.

71 Expert on Israeli policy, Author interview in person, January 31, 2013 It is worth mentioning that the Yaari article cited above reports that the “secret elections” held in 2012 strengthened the military wing at the expense of the political wing.

72 Bar, interview.

internal leadership in Gaza now predominates, with the external leadership becoming less relevant.⁷³ This has been a repeated factor for Israel and Hamas, most recently in discussions in mid-2014 of whether Hamas in Gaza ought to be held responsible for the actions of one of Hamas's militant cells in the West Bank. This will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

Bar reports that Israel is well aware of the need for clear communication and that it sometimes resorts to using 'a caricature of a message' to ensure that Hamas, with its limited intelligence capabilities and multiple audiences, receives that message.⁷⁴ Communication goes beyond direct relaying of messages and need not even involve actual words. 'Tacit bargaining', a phenomenon by which parties to a dispute negotiate via actions, e.g. testing what threshold of attack will spark retaliation, rather than words, is a salient concept here.⁷⁵ The final element is the perception of the threat by the party that is supposed to be deterred. This is perhaps best viewed as part of the definition of credible threats. Whether a threat is credible or not and whether the damage threatened is 'unacceptable' both depend on the perception of the party to be deterred.⁷⁶ In other words: Israel's capabilities and its threats are irrelevant if Hamas does not view them as threatening or credible.⁷⁷

Adding to the credibility problem, non-state actors may have a few advantages that state actors do not have, helping to make up for the asymmetry in the former's

73 Benedetta Berti, an expert on Hamas and Hezbollah as the INSS, suggests the internal leadership is becoming more dominant. Ehud Yaari, a prominent Israeli journalist and expert, agrees: Ehud Yaari, "Secret Hamas Elections Point to Internal Struggle," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, May 16, 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/secret-hamas-elections-point-to-internal-struggle>.

74 Bar, interview.

75 Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 21.

76 For a further discussion of perceptions of defender credibility, see: Patrick M. Morgan, "Saving Face for the Sake of Deterrence," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Perspectives on Security (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 125–52.

77 Again, one way to make threats seem incredible would be through excessive use by Israel of the "strategic disinformation" mentioned above. Hamas could be confused by messages that are sometimes false to the point that it decides to stop attempting to interpret Israel's overt messages.

conventional capabilities. One aspect that can be seen in the case of Hamas is the network-like structure of the organization and the fact that some parts of the organization operate well outside of territory controlled by Israel. This means that it may be more difficult to eliminate a non-state actor than it would be to eliminate a state actor with similar military capabilities. Max Boot makes the related argument that guerrillas have experienced success out of proportion with their ostensible capabilities due to their use of 'hit-and-run' tactics, which prevent 'the stronger state [from] bringing its full weight to bear'.⁷⁸ This applies to all non-state actors insofar as they are able to disappear into the civilian population after a strike. Even without trying to eliminate the actor, these factors also make it more difficult to deter non-state actors. Additionally, this can make threats by such groups all the more plausible because deterring the groups from carrying out those threats is more difficult, opening the door for non-state actors to 'punch above their weight'.

Criminologists on deterrence

The conception of deterrence in criminology has some striking similarities to situations involving the non-nuclear deterrence of non-state actors. For one thing, it is restrictive rather than absolute. For another, it expects that punishment can teach a party to be deterred ('specific deterrence') and that this can be used to establish norms that then must only be maintained with occasional uses of force. When writing about Israel and deterrence, the phrases 'red lines' and 'rules of the game' are often used to depict the limits of what Israel and its opponents are ready to accept. The 'rules of the game' are, in effect, norms, even if neither side is entirely happy to acquiesce to them. Because

⁷⁸ Max Boot, "The Evolution of Irregular Warfare: Insurgents and Guerrillas from Akkadia to Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 2 (April 2013): 100–114.

of its norm-setting function and the close association of norms with ideas of legitimacy, criminological conceptions stress the importance of proportionality of the punishment to the crime. Indeed, many criminologists have asserted that ‘disproportionate’ punishments, those that are seen as too harsh for a given crime, may in fact increase incentives to perpetrate worse crimes. These insights all have something to tell us about the practice of deterrence, especially as it regards norm-setting (establishing new ‘red lines’), deterrence, compellence, and proportionality.

Cesare Beccaria, an Italian jurist who was the first to take a utilitarian approach to criminal justice, stated that

‘Laws are the terms by which independent and isolated men united to form a society. [...] They sacrificed a portion of [their] liberty so that they could enjoy the remainder in security and peace.’ To protect these remaining portions, however, ‘Tangible measures were needed [...]. These tangible measures are the punishments established against lawbreakers. I say *tangible measures* because experience has shown that the multitude do not adopt fixed principles of conduct [...] unless those measures have a direct impact on the senses and present themselves continually to the mind in such a way as to counterbalance the strong impressions made by the particular passions that oppose the public good.’⁷⁹

This meant that ‘The purpose of punishment... is therefore none other than to prevent the criminal from doing fresh harm and to deter others from doing the same.’⁸⁰ Punishment therefore leads to the ‘specific deterrence’ of the offender himself and to the ‘general’ deterrence of others considering offending. This idea of specific deterrence is not found in the traditional international relations/strategic literature on deterrence, mainly due to the focus on nuclear weapons: there could be no learning if a deterrence

79 Cesare Beccaria, “On Crimes and Punishments,” in *On Crimes and Punishments and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron A. Thomas, trans. Aaron A. Thomas and Jeremy Parzen, The Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 11.

80 Ibid., 26.

failure ‘cancelled the future’.⁸¹ Some fourth-wave theorists, like Doron Almog, Thomas Rid, and Uri Bar-Joseph have already picked up on this possibility.⁸² They observe that progressive rounds of violence may over time teach Israel’s opponents, including non-state actors, that Israel cannot be defeated, eventually leading to peace. In this view, not every round of violence is necessarily a deterrence failure. Instead, it may be part of a chain leading to greater overall deterrence over time.

Beccaria and Voltaire both commented on proportionality, stressing that a lack thereof could lead to more crime rather than less: ‘If the same punishment is prescribed for two crimes that injure society in different degrees, then men will face no stronger deterrent from committing the greater crime if they find it in their advantage to do so.’⁸³ Voltaire provides an example: In a country where petty theft, grand larceny, and murder all carried the death penalty, the worst crimes would increase in frequency. For one thing, the aggrieved would be less likely to report a crime because they would not want to see someone put to death for it. For another: ‘Since the death penalty is applied equally to petty theft and grand larceny, it is clear that they will try to steal a lot. They could even become murderers if they think that this is a way not to be caught.’⁸⁴

This may not initially seem to apply to Israel, but it does. The assertion about an aggrieved’s willingness to report a crime is actually an observation about credibility: If Israel threatens to take extremely severe action in response to relatively minor infractions, this may lower its credibility and invite those very infractions as a means of

81 Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 19 It should be noted, however, that Morgan DOES argue that the superpowers learned to deter each other after WWII and that this occurred only slowly (39). This is not the type of learning referred to here, however, in which there is a possibility for multiple rounds of fighting to lead to greater deterrence.

82 Almog, “Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism”; Rid, “Deterrence Beyond the State”; Bar-Joseph, “Variations on a Theme.”

83 Beccaria, “On Crimes and Punishments,” 19.

84 Francois-Marie Arouet De Voltaire, “Commentary on the Book On Crimes and Punishments, by a Provincial Lawyer,” in *On Crimes and Punishments and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron A. Thomas, trans. Aaron A. Thomas and Jeremy Parzen, The Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 140.

testing its resolve, with Israel's credibility further undermined if it fails those tests. At the same time, if such an extreme response were forthcoming, there would be little to discourage Hamas from taking even greater action since it was already suffering the direst of consequences. This harks back Schelling's concept of a 'conciliatory promise': Deterrence requires not just the threat to take action if a certain red line is crossed, but also the promise not to if it is not.⁸⁵ If the status quo Israel promises to maintain is less acceptable (or equally so) than its threat, deterrence will fail. Followed to its logical conclusion, this suggests that deterrence can be bolstered through properly calibrated threats, but also through properly calibrated promises and rewards. If the status quo for Hamas is improved, it has more incentive to maintain that status quo and also more to lose in another round of escalation with Israel.

Specific deterrence in criminological practice

Does specific deterrence actually work? Empirical studies in criminology support the deductive reasoning of Beccaria and other utilitarian theorists with regard both to proportionality and the existence of specific deterrence. Criminological research into deterrence has often run into methodological issues, but these have proved more easily surmountable than those involved in studying political deterrence. They are therefore a useful complementary proxy to studies of deterrence from the international relations literature. An example of the methodological challenges is provided by the search for specific deterrence effects; some studies have found punishment to increase crime rather than reduce it.⁸⁶ Patricia Brennan and Sarnoff Mednick argue that much of this had to do with a failure to implement proper controls, however, particularly for

⁸⁵ Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 7.

assignment bias.⁸⁷ When they controlled for assignment bias, along with age and socio-economic status, they found that the Danish men in their study between the ages of 15 and 26 were less likely to re-offend if they received punishment for their crimes. Crucially, they also found that more certain punishments reduced recidivism more effectively. For example: Those arrested three times who received punishment three times (rather than being let off despite being found guilty) were less likely to re-offend than those punished only twice, who were in turn less likely to commit further crimes than those punished only once. Brennan and Mednick also found that more severe punishments did not reduce recidivism. In the case of first-time offenders, imprisonment even led to higher recidivism rates than fines. In addition, ‘easy jail’, which featured fewer restrictions on personal freedoms while incarcerated, led to lower rates of re-offending among first-time offenders than did harsher types of imprisonment.⁸⁸

Another study has shown that punishments can be too soft as well as too harsh, however. Research conducted by the Minneapolis Police Department, in which three police responses (arrest, ‘advice’, or an order for the offender to leave for eight hours) to domestic violence were randomly assigned, determined that arrest reduced subsequent violence more than forcing the offender to leave for eight hours, which was in turn more

86 See for example: M Gold and J.R. William, “The Effect of Getting Caught: Apprehension of the Juvenile Offenders as a Cause of Subsequent Delinquencies,” *Prospectus: A Journal of Law Reform*, no. 3 (1969): 1–12; L.W. Klemke, “Does Apprehension for Shoplifting Amplify or Terminate Shoplifting Activity?,” *Law and Society Review* 12, no. 3 (1978): 391–403; S. Shoham and M. Sandberg, “Suspended Sentences in Israel: An Evaluation of the Preventive Efficacy of Prospective Imprisonment,” *Crime & Delinquency* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1964): 74–83, doi:10.1177/001112876401000111.

87 Assignment bias is the likelihood that judges will punish more severely those they believe more likely to re-offend, adding a confounding correlation between severity of punishment and recidivism. To control for this, they grouped defendants together according to the number of prior offences, as prior re-offending is an indicator of the likelihood of future re-offending and also raises the likelihood of harsher sentencing.

88 Patricia A. Brennan and Sarnoff A. Mednick, “Learning Theory Approach to the Deterrence of Criminal Recidivism,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 103, no. 3 (August 1994): 430.

effective than simply providing advice.⁸⁹ Another study with randomized punishments found that specific deterrence worked, though it also discovered that instilling a sense of community was more effective at reducing recidivism than punishment.⁹⁰ In a more recent review of the scholarship on deterrence for the UK Government, Hirsch et al conclude that the idea that criminological deterrence works is now beyond doubt: ‘criminal punishment has by now been shown capable of having deterrent effects’.⁹¹ This all suggests that specific deterrence works and that frequent and certain punishment in response to each infraction is more effective than the severe punishment of only some of them. Here we find an echo of Beccaria’s assertion that punishment must be swift and certain, but that overly harsh punishments will lead to increased crime. In terms of deterring armed groups rather than criminals, this would suggest that frequent, certain punishments may reduce the likelihood of future attacks. Israel does indeed make an effort to respond in small ways to small Hamas ceasefire violations and in bigger ways to larger ones, as will be shown in the later chapters of this thesis.

Proportionality, the status quo, deterrence, and compellence

Beccaria and Voltaire stressed that punishments must be in proportion to their crimes lest overly harsh punishment undermine deterrence. What counts as a ‘proportionate’ punishment? One of Beccaria’s examples on proportionality suggests that what is seen as ‘proportionate’ is subjective and can change with time: ‘As punishments become more cruel, the minds of men, which like fluids always adjust to the level of the objects that surround them, become hardened, and the ever lively force

89 Lawrence Sherman and Richard Berk, “The Specific Deterrent Effects of Arrest for Domestic Assault,” *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 2 (April 1984): 261–72.

90 Anne L Schneider, *Deterrence and Juvenile Crime Results from a National Policy Experiment* (New York, NY: Springer New York, 1990), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-8925-5>.

91 Andrew von Hirsch et al., *Criminal Deterrence and Sentence Severity: An Analysis of Recent Research* (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, 1999).

of passions is such that after a hundred years of cruel punishments, breaking on the wheel causes no more fear than imprisonment previously did.’⁹² The implication is that what is seen as ‘proportionate’ is set in the eyes of the beholder. The definition of ‘proportional’ is therefore an additional rule within the ‘rules of the game’ that exist in any status quo between two parties. If Hamas does not respond to an Israeli retaliation with escalation, this indicates tacit acceptance that such a retaliation is ‘proportionate’. The same is true of Israeli reactions to Hamas actions. We can therefore judge the proportionality of responses in comparison with previous responses to similar undesirable actions.

Occasional breaches by Hamas are akin to the daily criminality dealt with by a domestic police force and should not be viewed as deterrence failures as they are all but inevitable in a situation in which deterrence is restrictive rather than absolute. Thomas Rid asserts that Israel has learned this lesson through long experience and implements it in practice. Attacks must be proportionate ‘when the goal is maintaining the rules [of the game, i.e. the status quo,] and keeping them from eroding’. He notes, however, that when the goal is to change the status quo, the ‘disproportionate use of force may be demanded’.⁹³ This is more nuanced than the conception of deterrence displayed by Daniel Byman, who avers that deterrence ‘demands *disproportionate* responses to any attack’.⁹⁴ This reveals a misconception of deterrence, which should properly be seen as a policy for maintaining the status quo. Any attempt to change the status quo through threats of force or violence is compellence. Since compellence is more difficult than deterrence, it is logical that the use of disproportionate force is necessary to overcome the resistance present on the other side due to the humiliation associated with the

92 Beccaria, “On Crimes and Punishments,” 50.

93 Rid, “Deterrence Beyond the State,” 138.

94 Byman, *A High Price*, 362.

inherently obvious nature of compliance with a compellent threat and the risk that the weakness shown will imply a lack of resolve for defending future commitments. It is thus to be expected that ‘disproportionate’ force is needed to establish a new status quo, while ‘proportionate’ force may be enough to maintain it. The former is compellence, the latter deterrence.

The constant need to establish a new status quo, and thus the inherent instability of the deterrence situation with Hamas, throws the sustainability of the current relationship between Hamas and Israel into question. Hamas is a special case among non-state actors because it in many ways transcends that label. For the purposes of deterrence, it is more or less the de facto government of a quasi-state. This gives it at least a minimal stake in the status quo (i.e. maintaining its control over the Gaza Strip). As Fatah discovered when it was seen as giving in to Israeli demands, however, maintaining the status quo may not be enough to maintain the support Hamas has enjoyed from the people of Gaza. The question of the sustainability of the current situation is therefore as critical as ever. It stands to reason that a more stable deterrence relationship that did not collapse into escalating violence as frequently as that between Israel and Hamas currently does would have the potential to last longer and therefore be more sustainable. A long calm might also open up possibilities for negotiations. This brings us back to the relationship between stability and credibility and whether Israel is overly concerned with the latter to the detriment of the former (see chapter 6 and the conclusion).

2.3 The strategy of cumulative deterrence and the Iron Wall doctrine

One of the goals of this thesis is to evaluate Israel’s ‘cumulative deterrence’ of

Hamas over the entire period of study and assess its future prospects. Doron Almog and Bar-Joseph write that cumulative deterrence is the process by which Israel's foes come to accept Israel's existence over time as the result of repeated failures to eliminate it.⁹⁵ This is a strategy of deterrence-by-denial for achieving Arab acquiescence: denied their aims, the Arabs, Palestinians included, eventually stop trying to achieve them. The implication is that peace might one day be achieved if Israel's opponents can be denied victory for long enough. Denial usually involves hardening targets and otherwise providing defence robust enough to make an opponent reconsider an attack. As a long-term strategy, however, denial can involve many other elements as well, from pre-emption to deterrence-by-punishment. Over the short term, pre-emption can undermine deterrence by altering the status quo and removing the promise of quiet-for-quiet. If it repeatedly succeeds in preventing attacks or weakening an opponent, however, that opponent may decide to avoid losses by no longer trying to prepare for attacks or even to arm in the first place. Repeated, successful pre-emption, while undermining deterrence-by-punishment in the short term, may achieve deterrence-by-denial over the long term. Similarly, successful deterrence-by-punishment itself may lead to deterrence-by-denial over the long term if repeated punishments convince an opponent that the defender is undefeatable.

The authors Freedman ('internalized deterrence'), Morgan, Rid, and Lupovici have all made reference to the potential for deterrence to establish norms of behaviour that become internalized.⁹⁶ Its functioning was explained by Shmuel Bar in an interview: After each round of violence with Hamas, Israel sets the bar for acceptable

⁹⁵ Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism"; Bar-Joseph, "Variations on a Theme."

⁹⁶ Freedman, *Deterrence*; Patrick M. Morgan, "Taking the Long View of Deterrence," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 5 (October 2005): 751–63, doi:10.1080/01402390500393837; Rid, "Deterrence Beyond the State"; Amir Lupovici, "The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence Theory-Toward a New Research Agenda," *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 54 (2010): 705–32.

Hamas violence lower. Over time, then, cycles of confrontations with Hamas will lead to lower levels of violence. For his part, Bar suggested this was a tactic, not a strategy. When asked if there was a plan for what to do when an acceptably low level of violence was achieved, he said ‘you take it day by day’.⁹⁷ Others have proposed answers to that question, however.

The Oxford Historian and Israel expert Avi Shlaim argues that Israel has followed a strategy based on an essay by the Zionist thinker Ze’ev Jabotinsky written before the founding of the State of Israel.⁹⁸ A closer look at Jabotinsky’s Iron Wall doctrine is warranted because it provides a fair description of Israeli defence policy and a template for combining control (pre-emption and defence) and coercion (deterrence-by-denial and -punishment) approaches to obtain a long-term, cumulative denial effect. Combined with the considerations in the previous section, it is the last piece in the ‘updated’ deterrence model this author has used as a conceptual lens for investigating the relationship between Israel and Hamas.

Jabotinsky wrote about his ‘Iron Wall’ concept in a 1923 essay that had a decisive impact on later thinking. As one Israeli journalist has noted: ‘More streets, parks, and squares are named after Ze’ev Jabotinsky than any other Zionist leader, and many factions cite him as inspiration.’⁹⁹ Many Zionists at the time believed Jews could create a state in Palestine with the acquiescence of the Arab population there. He stridently rejected that idea. ‘There can be no voluntary agreement between ourselves and the Palestine Arabs. Not now, nor in the prospective future... My readers have a general idea of the history of colonization in other countries. I suggest that they consider

⁹⁷ Bar, interview.

⁹⁸ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin, 2001).

⁹⁹ Joanna Paraszczuk, “A Revisionist’s History,” *www.JPost.com*, April 28, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/Metro/Features/A-revisionists-history>.

all the precedents with which they are acquainted, and see whether there is one solitary instance of any colonization being carried on with the consent of the native population. There is no such precedent.’¹⁰⁰ He went on to counter those who claimed that Arab resistance was due to a misunderstanding. This idea held that Arabs would agree to allow Jews to immigrate to Palestine if they just understood that they would be treated well and not driven off their lands. Jabotinsky began his essay stressing his support for ‘equal rights’, as long as Jews made up the majority in the population, and asserted that ‘we shall never try to eject anyone’. This was irrelevant, however, as ‘the future of the Arab minority would depend on the goodwill of the Jews; and a minority status is not a good thing, as the Jews themselves are never tired of pointing out. So there is no “misunderstanding”. The Zionists want only one thing, Jewish immigration; and this Jewish immigration is what the Arabs do not want.’¹⁰¹

Jabotinsky assured his readers that his eventual goal was peace and that peace was eventually possible. For the time being, however, that goal was not achievable and it was anyway secondary to the goal of establishing a Jewish state. Like ‘mainstream’ Zionists, his aim was a Jewish state with a majority Jewish population. Where he differed from many other Zionists (whom he called ‘peace-mongers’), was in the means to this end. Negotiation with the Arabs could not lead to the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine. The state thus needed to be established without their consent. ‘Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population—behind an *iron wall*, which the native population

¹⁰⁰Ze'ev Jabotinsky, “The Iron Wall,” November 4, 1923,
http://www.jabotinsky.org/multimedia/upl_doc/doc_191207_49117.pdf.
¹⁰¹Ibid.

cannot breach.’¹⁰²

Once the Arabs had lost all hope of breaching the ‘iron wall’,

the leadership will pass to the moderate groups... And when that happens, I am convinced that we Jews will be found ready to give them satisfactory guarantees, so that both peoples can live together in peace, like good neighbours. But the only way to obtain such an agreement, is the iron wall, which is to say a strong power in Palestine that is not amenable to any Arab pressure.¹⁰³

Avi Shlaim argues the Iron Wall, particularly its first stage, has been Israel’s unacknowledged strategy ever since.¹⁰⁴ David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister and, until the establishment of the State of Israel, chairman of the executive committee of the World Zionist Organization, accepted Jabotinsky’s reasoning that the Arabs of Palestine would never accept a Jewish state there as long as they had any hope of eradicating it. ‘A comprehensive agreement is undoubtedly out of the question now. For only after total despair on the part of the Arabs, despair that will come not only from the failure of the disturbances and the attempt at rebellion, but also as a consequence of our growth in the country, may the Arabs possibly acquiesce in a Jewish Eretz Israel.’¹⁰⁵ Although he did not use the terminology of Jabotinsky’s ‘Iron Wall’ essay, he had clearly come to the same conclusions.¹⁰⁶ Israel’s Arab strategy has been heavily influenced by these concepts ever since. Israel’s current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, wrote in a book published in 2000, ‘the only kind of peace that can endure in the Middle East is a peace that can be defended (the peace of deterrence)’.¹⁰⁷ In his analysis, the reason Israel, the Palestinians, and Israel’s other Arab neighbours have no

102Ibid., emphasis added.

103Ibid.

104Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*.

105David Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders* (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1972), 80.

106Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 19.

107Binyamin Netanyahu, *A Durable Peace: Israel and Its Place among the Nations* (New York: Warner Books, 2000), chap. 7.

yet achieved peace is because the Arabs have yet to accept Israel's permanent existence. Until they do, Israel must defend itself and deter aggression.

2.4 Cumulative and specific deterrence, push factors, and positive reinforcement: An updated deterrence model for Israel and Hamas

The model of deterrence used in this thesis incorporates the above insights from the 3rd and 4th 'waves' of deterrence scholarship as well as those from criminology. In many ways, criminology provides the main gateway for the move from the deterrence of the Cold War era to the variety practised by Israel. The first step in this involves a shift from an absolute definition of successful deterrence to the restrictive one always utilized in the study of crime. Theft continues to occur despite the best efforts of law enforcement. Few would therefore suggest, however, that criminal justice systems should no longer seek to deter crime. The same is true of attacks by Hamas: the expectation is of fewer attacks due to deterrence, not no attacks at all. As shown in 2.2 above, criminological research also provides empirical evidence in support of the existence of deterrent effects. While these cannot be used to *prove* that states or non-state actors can be deterred by punishment, they do support the idea.

The next step that a criminological conception of deterrence allows is the idea of specific deterrence. Criminologists expect that some people will be deterred from ever committing a given crime out of fear of being punished as a result. This resembles the idea of deterrence in the nuclear age, when the hope was that the mere threat of nuclear retaliation would be enough to forestall any attack. There was no room in this conception for rounds of nuclear missile launches leading to greater deterrence over

time. ‘Specific deterrence’, the process by which specific criminals are deterred after committing a crime and receiving punishment for it, is not part of the deterrence parlance in the international relations literature. The idea that rounds of attacks and reprisals, the political equivalents of crimes and punishments, can teach deterrence over time also provides the key theoretical stepping stone to cumulative deterrence, the idea that Israel’s opponents can be taught over time to accept ever-lower levels of violence and, eventually, Israel’s permanent existence. Israel has long attempted to carry out such deterrence, but theory, in the form of ‘fourth wave’ deterrence research, is only now catching up with that practice. This thesis looks at Israel’s deterrence of Hamas through a restrictive deterrence lens that views rounds of violence as potentially leading to improved deterrence and lower violence over time.

‘Third wave’ research insights are also incorporated here. Perhaps most important in that regard are Lebow and Stein’s ‘push factors’, pressures placed on an opponent that encourage that opponent to violate a cease-fire or strike at the defender even if such an action seems futile and therefore irrational. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below depict the deterrence model of this thesis in graphic form, incorporating both these push factors and ‘pull factors’ (defender weaknesses, perceived or otherwise, that may encourage opportunistic attacks). The second figure alters the model to depict a situation of ‘indirect deterrence’, a ‘fourth wave’ concept whereby the defender encourages a third party, through threats and/or incentives, to rein in the opponent. The increased complexity of the indirect model also makes for an increased number of potential push and pull factors, which must be managed between not only the defender and the opponent, but also with the third party, making so-called indirect deterrence more difficult. Such issues will feature prominently in chapter 4.

It bears remembering that deterrence is a tool for making ‘agreements work when trust and good faith are lacking and there is no legal recourse for breach of contract’.¹⁰⁸ These ‘agreements’ are not cordial, but they nevertheless reflect an acceptance of certain conditions because accepting them is seen by both parties to a conflict to be in that party’s own best interest. Deterrence will begin to erode when this is no longer the case. Because Lebow and Stein showed that push factors were just as likely, if not more likely, to cause escalations than pull factors, and that these push factors were often inadvertently created by defenders in attempts to show resolve, this thesis will also focus on what Israel has done and can do to ameliorate such push factors and improve deterrence stability—thus keeping the interests of Israel and Hamas in alignment.¹⁰⁹ The promise not to attack noted by Schelling is a promise to maintain the status quo. It stands to reason that, the better the status quo is for an opponent, the more likely that opponent is to maintain it. Providing additional benefits as a reward for peaceful periods also increases the number and variety of things a defender can target in retaliation, which should grant it greater leeway to calibrate responses as it chooses. The stability-enhancing potential of this sort of ‘positive reinforcement’ will therefore also be explored in the body chapters and in the conclusion of this thesis.

¹⁰⁸Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 20.

¹⁰⁹Richard Ned Lebow, “The Deterrence Deadlock: Is There a Way Out?,” in *Psychology and Deterrence*, Perspectives on Security (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 184.

Diagram of 'push' and 'pull' factors

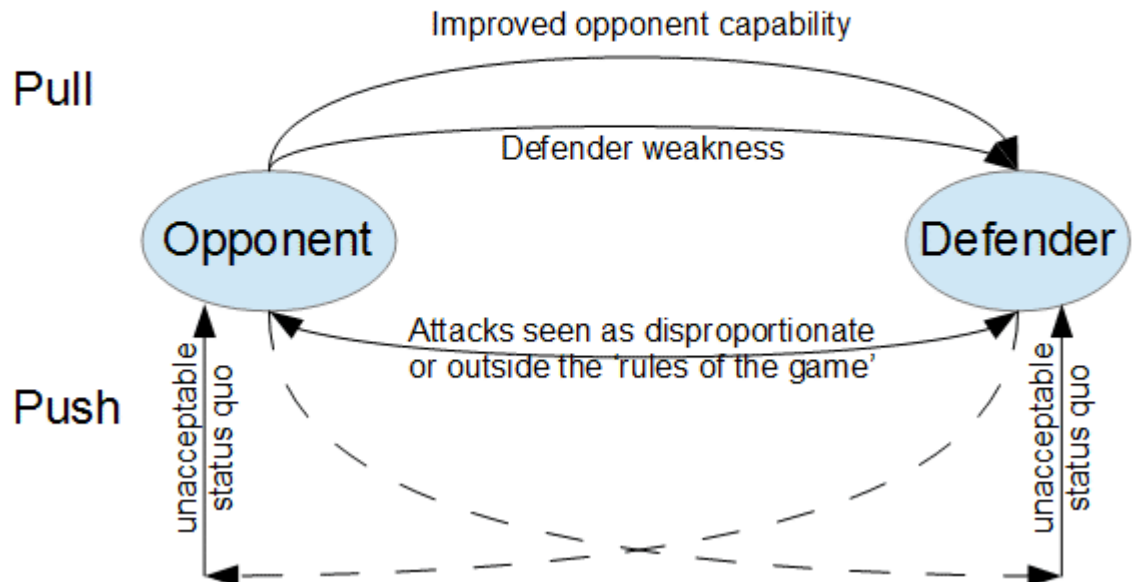


Figure 2.1: Factors that 'pull' and 'push' an opponent towards attacks and thus undermine deterrence.

Diagram of 'push' and 'pull' factors in 'indirect' deterrence

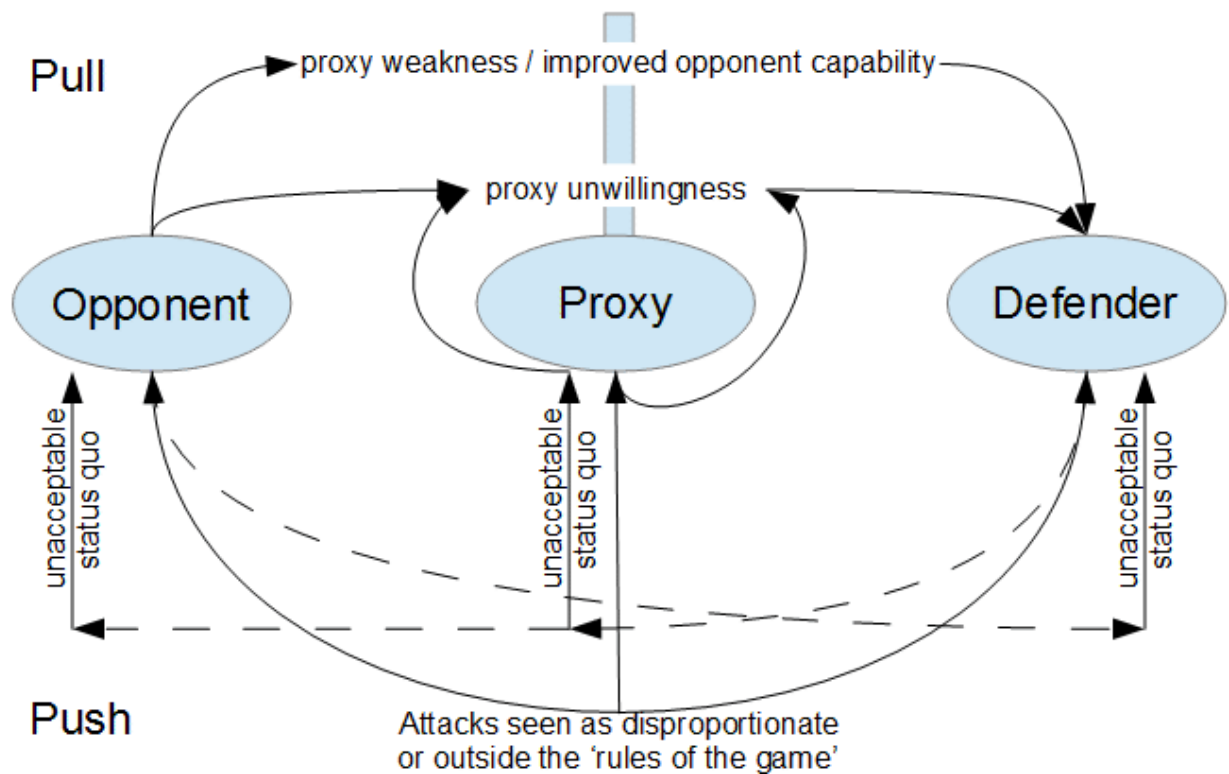


Figure 2.2: Factors that 'pull' and 'push' an opponent towards attacks and thus undermine deterrence in an 'indirect' deterrence relationship.

3. Hamas's Characteristics and Deterrence

The purpose of this chapter is to take a closer look at Hamas, its interests, its *raison d'être*, its structure, and the variations in its nature (from a religious and social group, to an armed resistance organization, to the ruling authority of a quasi-state in Gaza). In particular, it will ask what effect these factors can be expected to have on attempts to deter Hamas. The first section will examine Hamas's *raison d'être* as a resistance group and the effect its religiosity can be expected to have on its willingness to negotiate or accept peace with Israel. This is not as straightforward as it might seem, as Hamas is religious, but it is also nationalist and therefore desires at least eventual control of territory, at which point it also gains a stake in the status quo. In addition, Hamas recognizes that its continued relevance requires not just resistance, but its continued survival. Both of these aspects mean that Hamas does have valuable assets that it could lose in conflicts with Israel, making it at least theoretically susceptible to coercion and deterrence. Thereafter, the chapter turns to Hamas's decentralized structure, uncertainty regarding Hamas's command-and-control structures, and potential strife between and within its armed and political wings and its internal and external leaderships, and the challenges these factors all pose for deterrence. They all make deterrence more difficult, but, the chapter will argue, not impossible.

3.1 The formation of Hamas and its ideals

Understanding Hamas and its motivations, and therefore their impact on its

deterrability, requires a brief look at its history and ideological ancestry. The name ‘Hamas’ is an acronym for *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah*, or ‘Islamic Resistance Movement’. ‘Hamas’ itself means ‘zeal’ or ‘enthusiasm’ in Arabic. Its 1987 founders included Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantissi, Dr. Mahmoud Zahar, Musa Abu Marzouq, Ismail Abu Shenab, Salah Shehadeh, Ibrahim al-Yazuri, Issa al-Nashar, and Abdel Fattah al-Dukhan.¹ The movement sprang out of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization with branches in much of the Arab world now perhaps best known for its brief stint running Egypt before its government was ousted in a 2013 military coup.

Hamas’s view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its own role within it are described in its Charter and in a 1993 ‘introductory memorandum’. The memorandum asserts that Zionism is to be seen as part of a ‘Western project to bring the Arab Islamic *umma* under the domination of Western culture, to make it dependent on the West, and to perpetuate its underdevelopment’.² The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is thus ‘a conflict between the Muslim Ummah [transnational body of believers] and Israel’s colonial expansionism.’³ It thus sees Zionism as a form of colonialism and Israel as little more than an artificial Western colony and tool for Western subjugation. The memorandum also sets out four points that together form Hamas’s resistance doctrine. It is worth reproducing these points in full here, because Hamas’s actions and statements continue to reflect this doctrine to this day:

1. The Palestinian people are the direct target of the Zionist settler occupation. Therefore, they must bear the main burden of resisting the unjust occupation. This is why Hamas seeks to mobilize the full potential of the Palestinian people

1 Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010), 53.
2 Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Inst. for Palestine Studies, 2000), chap. The Strategy of Hamas.
3 Khaled Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS* (London: MEMO Publishers, 2013), 3.

- and channel it into steadfast resistance against the usurper.
2. Palestine is the terrain for confrontation with the enemy. The Arab and Islamic countries are regions from which our Palestinian people can draw support, particularly political, informational, and financial support; but the bloody confrontation with our Zionist enemy must take place on the sacred soil of Palestine...
 3. There must be incessant resistance to and confrontation with the enemy in Palestine until we achieve victory and liberation. Jihad for the cause of God is our objective in that confrontation. The best method of resistance is to do battle with the soldiers of the enemy and destroy their armor.
 4. It is our view that political action is one of the means for pursuing jihad against the Zionist enemy. Its objective should be to strengthen the endurance of our people and our *umma* in defense of our cause; to defend the rights of our people; and to present their just cause to the international community.⁴

Several points stand out. The first is that Hamas, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood from which it stems, believed that Palestinians could not and should not wait for outsiders, including other Arabs and Muslims, to fight for them. Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin, who became the head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza in 1968, himself initially opposed taking up arms against Israel, but not because he wished to wait for outsiders or until Palestinian society had been fully Islamized, as many within the Muslim Brotherhood argued.⁵ Instead, Hamas supporter Azzam Tamimi insists his reluctance was purely tactical. He quotes Yassin: 'I had a personal desire, and I was motivated, to launch the battle as early as 1967. However, whenever we studied the circumstances and assessed the resources we found them insufficient and had to postpone. Then we would study the case once more then postpone again.'⁶ As Khaled Meshaal, the head of Hamas's external leadership puts it: 'We can't afford to follow the old, mistaken view that as long as the conflict with Israel has Arab and Islamic input then the Palestinians should wait and see what the Arab states do with their armies. ... the Palestinian people should not be spectators to their own freedom struggle and simply

4 Hroub, *Hamas*, chap. The Strategy of Hamas.

5 Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch, 2011), 32.

6 Ibid., 35.

wait for others to do something about it.’⁷ At the same time, however, Hamas does not believe the Palestinians can ‘liberate’ Palestine all by themselves. They expect ‘the Arab and Islamic world... to engage in defence of their mutual destiny, moving beyond moral support and solidarity’.⁸ After all, the ‘religious dimension of the conflict also spreads it beyond the responsibility of the Palestinians, for Palestine’s history and status makes it exceptional for Muslims and Christians alike’.⁹ (One might note here that Meshaal omits the importance of the region to Jews.) Hamas therefore sees its role as *resisting* Israel, not defeating it, as it expects that it cannot do this alone. This will have important implications in later chapters as regards Hamas’s definition of ‘success’ in any particular round of conflict with Israel.

Well into the 1980s, the Brotherhood’s line was that the ‘liberation’ of Palestine ‘was too great a task, which only the power of an Islamic state could undertake’.¹⁰ Debate continued right through the First Intifada, as Palestinians remained divided over the utility of armed struggle. Sheikh Yassin, however, decided to prepare for action. He and a close circle of associates received funding from the Kuwait branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to purchase weapons and send men to Amman for training as fighters in 1982 and Brotherhood organizations from several countries met and agreed to provide financial and logistical support to the Brotherhood in Islam to wage jihad. The plot was soon uncovered, however, and Yassin was arrested.¹¹ Many within the Brotherhood opined that this showed how futile taking up armed struggle against Israel was.¹² Even while the First Intifada was already underway, many moderate members of the Muslim

7 Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, 4–5.

8 Ibid., 5.

9 Ibid., 5–6.

10 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 45.

11 Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007), 45; *ibid.*, 46; Shaul Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 34.

12 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 47.

Brotherhood were still arguing against taking violent action.¹³ Yassin and his compatriots, however, surmised that the time had come and founded Hamas to begin armed resistance against Israel (see chapter 4).

Hamas has always been an organization more narrowly focused on nationalist goals for Palestine than the Muslim Brotherhood's pan-Islamic goals for change throughout the Muslim world. The second point in the memorandum reflects this: Hamas has always restricted the territory of its fight against Israel to Israel and Palestine. Unlike the PLO, which used international terrorism in its early days to attract attention, it has always avoided expanding its list of targets abroad. Hamas expert Khaled Hroub quotes an internal Hamas memo as stating: '[T]he movement has no quarrel with any foreign nation. It is not the policy of Hamas to attack or undermine the interests or possessions of various states.'¹⁴ This is probably strategically shrewd. Arafat abandoned attacks on foreign targets after 1973 because of pressure from Arab governments 'and because [his] international operations were damaging the diplomatic progress the PLO had made after Munich'.¹⁵ Hamas has long attempted to bolster its position internationally by portraying itself as a victim responding to Israeli aggression. This portrayal would be harder to carry off if Hamas also attacked European or American targets.

Hamas has not abandoned the Pan-Arab ideals of its parent organization altogether, however. Meshaal makes this clear in his critique of 'the nation state and the narrow prejudices it inevitably produces'. Pan-Arabism is an eventual goal, however, much like the defeat of Israel: 'We are not asking the regimes or governments to

13 Nicolas Tatro, "Palestinians: United In the Street, Divided Over Peacemaking," *The Associated Press*, March 4, 1988, PM Cycle edition, sec. International News.

14 Hroub, *Hamas*, chap. The Parties to the Struggle.

15 Daniel Byman, *A High Price : The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 48.

abandon that reality in one go, because it is substantial. What we call for is that the concerns of the nation-state and local interests should not override Arab and Islamic interests.’ ‘We live in a world with a globalised economy, easily accessible mass media and social networks, effective communications and transport, and common influences’. He asserts that this is leading to the creation of ‘blocs and planning on a continental rather than national scale’ and points to super-national unity in ‘our own history’, referring to the Ottoman Empire and its predecessor Caliphates.¹⁶

The third point in the doctrine set out by the memorandum contains a remark with consequences for deterrence: ‘Jihad for the cause of God is our objective.’ For Hamas, the fight itself is the goal. Hamas’s timeline for victory is in centuries or millennia, not months or years. As Abu Bakr Nofal puts it: ‘The world is in a hurry. We are not in a hurry.’¹⁷ Canny observers may note a congruence between this perspective and the long-term and indefinite horizon espoused by the Iron Wall strategy and reflected in comments from the current Israeli leadership opposing the West’s ‘solutionism’. The conflict may not be resolvable today, but that may change. Rushing to try to resolve it before the time is ripe would be a worse blunder than waiting.¹⁸ It is more difficult to deter a group that perceives fighting as equally important to winning, especially when it views time with such long horizons. To be viewed as successful and in keeping with the goals it professes, Hamas must merely live to fight another day, not achieve any specific and immediate goals. Nevertheless, only a group’s most devoted followers will continue to follow it if it appears to be completely stalled or to be making things worse for the general population. This is why Hamas pays considerable attention

16 Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, 8–9.

17 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 17.

18 Gil Hoffman, “‘US Shifted from Resolving to Managing Conflict,’” *The Jerusalem Post* | *JPost.com*, December 25, 2011, online edition, sec. Diplomacy & Politics, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/US-shifted-from-resolving-to-managing-conflict>.

to public opinion in an attempt to maintain significant support among the Palestinian public. ‘A basic element necessary to achieve a breakthrough in international relations is for us to be strong on the ground; embedded within our people and community.’¹⁹ This ties in with Hamas’s concerns about legitimacy, which led it to participate in elections in 2006: ‘A lack of participation would have facilitated our downfall on the grounds that we would have strayed from Palestinian legitimacy and a national decision. [...] We are satisfied that we were acting from a position of democratic *legitimacy*.’²⁰

Hamas’s desire for public support also plays a role in the final point about political actions as a means to *jihad*, which highlights Hamas’s willingness to make instrumental use of politics. It is keen to engage in politics if this will help strengthen it. Indeed, as will be discussed in 3.2, Hamas sees politics and a ‘*shura*’ democracy as ways to facilitate a necessary Islamization of society. This engagement with public opinion is both a strength, in that it may help ensure continued support for Hamas, and a weakness, as measures designed to target Palestinian public opinion can negatively impact Hamas. This has been especially true since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip (see chapter 6). At the same time, Meshaal recognizes that religion is also instrumental in Hamas’s conflict with Israel, as it ‘informs our sense of belonging, our identity, our culture and our daily conduct and reinforces our patience and fortitude.... As such, it plays a significant role in opposing the oppression of our people and community.’²¹ Politics can aid in the Islamization of society, which will provide strength for the fight against Israel, which will then pave the way towards the ultimate goal of an Islamic state that will transcend current national borders.

19 Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, 33.

20 Ibid., 52, emphasis added.

21 Ibid., 31.

3.2 Deterrability: Hamas's beliefs, ideological rigidity, and the problem of high motivation

Hamas's beliefs and ideology make it more difficult to deter. They grant it a high level of motivation, but they do not make it irrational, as argued in the last chapter. As works like Robert Pape's *Dying to Win* have shown, committing suicide for a cause, which strikes many the West as an irrational act, has a strategic logic. Indeed, the very shock of encountering opponents who are undeterred by death is part of the reason suicide attacks spread terror so effectively.²² Furthermore, the definition of rationality set out by Schelling requires only that people act in accordance with an 'internally consistent value system'.²³ The fact that people are willing to die for a cause is not surprising if one considers the possibility that a person can value political goals more highly than their own lives. Such a willingness is not terribly unusual. Western militaries may not intentionally send soldiers on one-way missions, but soldiers are frequently willing to place themselves in harm's way and countenance a considerable risk of death or dismemberment out of a belief that the cause for which they fight is a just one worth potentially dying for. This is the reason for common references to a willingness to die for one's country and beliefs in expressions of popular culture like Hollywood films, in which such a willingness is portrayed as a heroic value, not inexplicably irrational behaviour. As will be visible in subsequent chapters, Hamas has changed tactics in response to changing conditions on the ground several times since its founding in 1987. It also always has an eye on Palestinian public opinion. Adapting to

22 Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Kindle edition (New York: Random House, 2005).

23 Thomas C Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University, 1980), 4.

changing conditions when tactics become less successful is the action of a rational actor. Hamas is therefore not irrational, but it is highly motivated. The devotion of its members to its cause does make it more difficult to deter. This is reflected in the group's *raison d'être* and reinforced by the religious underpinnings of many of the positions it espouses.

Hamas's reason for being is based on resistance to Israel and the eventual 'liberation' of all of mandatory Palestine. Giving up this goal would threaten the ideological cohesion that holds the group together. This makes deterring Hamas from resistance more difficult, a problem common to the deterrence of many non-state actors, who often share similar aims. As Shmuel Bar noted, contrasting Israel's deterrence of Hamas with the US's deterrence of Russia in the Cold War: 'There's a difference between deterring someone from something he really wants to do and keeping him from falling into a situation neither of you want'.²⁴ Perhaps Hamas could be deterred from *violent* resistance while carrying it out in different ways? Although some Hamas members have shown some potential flexibility on this (see below), this is also problematic. As Jeroen Gunning highlights: 'Violence plays a significant role both in Hamas' discourse and symbolism, and in its overall identity as a "security provider". At issue is not whether Hamas actually delivers increased "security". Rather, it is the perception among both its leaders and its supporters that Hamas' violent record is an important part of what makes it a legitimate political faction in the Palestinian arena—in other words, that given the perception of a threat to existence, violence-as-protection is a valued commodity.'²⁵ Violence is difficult to stop because Hamas and its supporters view it as valuable and potentially useful. This in itself makes an important point:

24 Shmuel Bar, Author interview in person, February 27, 2013.

25 Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 175.

Though it is also part of Hamas's identity, violence is still a means to a national-political end. Furthermore, Hamas experts Mishal and Sela assert that 'Hamas's concern about the population's daily hardships and immediate needs... increased its awareness and hesitation to translate its dogmatic vision into actual practice' during the First Intifada.²⁶ They also suggest that the group is in many ways typical of Islamic movements like the Muslim Brotherhood that are common in the Middle East, including with regard to violence. The authors give the example of Hasan al-Turabi, the leader of the Islamic National Front, a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot in Sudan. Turabi promotes the legitimacy of violence to counter repression, but 'emphasizes the importance of gradual penetration into the armed forces and bureaucratic apparatuses, parallel to the participation in politics.' Like many Islamist movements, elements of Hamas's doctrine require it to consult with the public.²⁷ The question for long-term deterrence is thus whether Hamas, its supporters, and that public continue to view violence as valuable and potentially useful and whether Israel can influence that perception.

Religion and rigidity

Hamas's religiosity adds rigidity when it comes to negotiating. For example, Hamas itself is unlikely *ever* to recognize Israel's right to exist in what it views as Muslim land granted to the *umma* (world community of believers) from Allah himself. As Tamimi explains: 'If Hamas remains loyal to its founding principles, it will not recognize Israel's right to exist. [...] The movement regards Israel as nothing but a colonial enclave planted in the heart of the Muslim world. [...] Another consideration is

26 Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 60.

27 John Esposito and James Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 427–40.

that Palestine is an Islamic land that has been invaded and occupied by a foreign power. It would contravene the principles of Hamas's Islamic faith to recognize the legitimacy of the foreign occupation of any Muslim land.²⁸ Article 11 of Hamas's charter reflects this: 'The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic *Waqf* [endowment] throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it.'²⁹ This would seem to make Hamas almost undeterrable, but in actuality, it is more accurate to say merely that it will be all but impossible to compel Hamas to accept Israel's right to exist. Refusing to recognize Israel does not necessarily imply a need for constant violence and Hamas has shown some flexibility in this regard. It should also be pointed out, however, that although the PA does recognize Israel, recognizing Israel as explicitly Jewish is a bridge too far. Even Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has repeatedly stated that he would not—and never would—recognize Israel as a specifically Jewish state.³⁰

Religion and flexibility

Religion does not always rule out compromise, however. Gunning laments that 'the secularisation credo has led scholars to unproblematically regard Islamists as rigidly dogmatic compared to their secularist counterparts, ignoring both the existence of persistent dogmatism among secularists, and the capacity of Islamists to reinterpret

28 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 156–157.

29 "Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas," *The Jerusalem Fund*, accessed October 21, 2011, <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html>.

30 Jeffrey Heller, "Abbas Says Won't Recognize Israel as Jewish State," *Reuters*, April 27, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-idUSTRE53Q2ZU20090427>; Khaled Abu Toameh, "Abbas Reaffirms Refusal to Recognize Israel as a Jewish State," *The Jerusalem Post* | *JPost.com*, January 11, 2014, online edition, sec. Diplomacy & Politics, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Abbas-reaffirms-refusal-to-recognize-Israel-as-a-Jewish-state-337854>.

their sacred texts in response to changes in political opportunities.’³¹ As the scholars Mishal and Sela point out, ‘the question is not how closely Hamas adheres to official dogma, but how and to what extent Hamas is able to justify political conduct that sometimes deviates from its declared doctrine without running the risk of discontent or internal dispute among its followers.’³² Hamas has, for example, moderated its view of its enemy. ‘In the first two years of Hamas’s existence (1987-89), the preliminary identification of friends and foes... was rather oversimplified. In subsequent years, Hamas’s discourse reflected a new sensitivity to the idea that it was unwise to expand the list of one’s enemies... . In its presentation of the identity of the parties to the conflict, the Hamas Charter is a good example of the earlier phase, which was influenced by the traditional stereotype of a Crusader-style world Jewish conspiracy against Islam.’³³ The Charter makes frequent reference to the ‘crusader West’ and ‘Communist East’ and even includes ‘Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions, and other spying associations’ among Hamas’s enemies.³⁴ ‘Such language vanished from the movement’s literature and political discourse, and its dealings at the international level ceased to reflect such positions. Since the early 1990s, this change can be attributed to the input of Hamas’s “outside” leadership. A number of leading personalities who have lived abroad and been exposed to wider experiences than their counterparts in the Gaza Strip (who formulated the Hamas Charter) have re-oriented Hamas’s political thinking and influenced the formulation of its discourse.’³⁵

From the beginning, Hamas has also showed a (proscribed) willingness to negotiate with Israel. Hamas founder Mahmoud Zahar met with the then Minister of

31 Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence*, 11.

32 Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, viii.

33 Hroub, *Hamas*, chap. The Parties to the Struggle.

34 “Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas.”

35 Hroub, *Hamas*, chap. The Parties to the Struggle.

Foreign Affairs, Shimon Peres, in 1988 and spoke of negotiations on terms that are strikingly similar to those Hamas proposes to this day. Hamas's proposal 'consisted of the following: a call for Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 territories, put the occupied territories under a neutral side, choose our representatives by our own methods, elected by us. Everything should be on the agenda, and we should even discuss Israel's existence and the right of return.'³⁶ These are not, to be clear, proposals to end the conflict. Instead, they are a proposal for a *hudna*, or long-term (potentially over decades) ceasefire, that would let a future generation decide on how to end the conflict. Many Israelis are uncomfortable with the idea of negotiating an agreement with an entity that would continue to call for the destruction of their country. Efraim Halevy, a former head of Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, has a different view, however. Recalling the Treaties of Westphalia, he remarks 'Europe has enjoyed a *hudna* for around 300 years. In view of there being no really viable alternative, should we continue to ignore Hamas in any political context?'³⁷ The fact that Hamas would even consider maintaining quiet for an extended period indicates that deterrence of Hamas is not as impossible as Hamas's rigid ideological positions might suggest, though it does call into question the longevity of such deterrence. This is not necessarily a fatal flaw, however, if deterrence is used as a tactic for *conflict management* rather than as a strategy for *conflict resolution*.

Hamas has thus shown a limited willingness to negotiate, but it should not be surprising that Hamas views negotiations as an 'extension of the struggle' and 'a way of conducting the war in a different manner'.³⁸ 'If resistance itself is a means and not an objective, it is inconceivable that negotiations could be made an objective—a sole

36 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 59.

37 Efraim Halevy, "Israel's Hamas Portfolio," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* II, no. 3 (2008): 41–47.

38 Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, 19.

option and permanent programme rather than a means or tactic that can be resorted to when needed and strategically advantageous.’³⁹ After all, ‘[i]f your enemies know that you do not possess anything except negotiations; you don’t speak about anything except peace; and don’t possess any other option, why should they make concessions to you?’⁴⁰ Hamas is thus unwilling to negotiate a final settlement unless and until it has the ability to force that settlement to occur on its terms, meaning the destruction of the State of Israel. A temporary peace would be tactical. As Halevy suggests, however, such a peace could turn out to be useful, especially in the absence of alternatives.

The rigidity of Hamas’s position on negotiations and peace might seem to suggest that it can only be defeated, not coerced. Individual Hamas members, however, have hinted at ways to circumvent this rigidity. Speaking of a theoretical Palestinian referendum on a permanent peace deal with Israel, Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh told Reuters in 2010 that Hamas would ‘respect the results (of a referendum) regardless of whether it differs with its ideology and principles.’⁴¹ Haniyeh is not alone in this. One of Hamas’s co-founding members, Sheikh Hassan Yousef, also declared: ‘It is our right to oppose an agreement that [PA President] Mahmoud Abbas brings, like you have your own opposition, but I stress here: we will accept the results of a national referendum and the decision of the majority’.⁴² By separating itself from decisions made by a Palestinian government and/or the Palestinian people, Hamas opens a door to potential agreements with Israel that it ‘accepts’ even as it disagrees with them. This could allow Hamas to compromise, as long as negotiations are carried out by others,

39 Ibid., 20.

40 Ibid., 21.

41 JPost.com Staff and Associated Press, “‘Hamas Will Honor Palestinian Referendum on Peace Deal,’” *Jerusalem Post*, December 1, 2010, sec. Middle East, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Hamas-will-honor-Palestinian-referendum-on-peace-deal>.

42 Avi Issacharoff, “Hamas Would Accept Peace with Israel, West Bank Leader Says,” *The Times of Israel*, March 25, 2014, sec. Israel & the Region, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-would-accept-peace-with-israel-west-bank-leader-says/>.

even as it maintains the image of ideological purity essential to its self-conception. In that regard, it is notable that Hamas has already agreed to unity governments with Fatah and agreed to work within the Palestinian Authority, an authority that officially recognizes Israel.⁴³ Hamas's short-term ideological flexibility provides it with short-term political advantages 'at a tolerable normative sacrifice'.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Hamas is more of a religiously-inspired nationalist (or pan-nationalist) movement than a nationalism-inspired religious movement. As Hamas military-wing leader Sheikh Saleh al-Aroui asserts: 'For us as Muslims it is not a religious war because we lived together here before 1948. [...] In our area there was never a genocide based on religion. This is only a nationalistic issue and a nationalistic war because of the occupation.'⁴⁵ Indeed, others have argued that the stress should be placed on the 'political' in 'political Islam' in general. The British former Islamist Maajid Nawaz notes that the man who first recruited him into an Islamist organization spoke not 'in the orthodox, religious way of the imam with a stick; he was talking about politics, and about events that were happening now. That's crucial to understanding what Islamism is all about: it isn't a religious movement with political consequences, it is a political movement with religious consequences.'⁴⁶ Although its national goal for a unified Palestine on all of what are now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza and the religious idea that no leader can surrender Muslim lands does serve to stiffen Hamas's opposition to *permanent* concessions much more than it did to Arafat's Fatah, Hamas's nationalistic yearnings are important. They mean that Hamas requires a Palestinian state and recognition, neither of which can become a reality without *territory*. Hamas's

43 Mishal and Sela argue it is the separation of short and long-term goals that allows Hamas this flexibility: Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 48.

44 Ibid., 148.

45 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 15.

46 Maajid Nawaz and Tom Bromley, *Radical* (Croydon, UK: WH Allen, 2013), 85–86.

control of territory (and its desire to maintain it) is therefore an asset that Israel can hold at risk when attempting to deter Hamas.

The problem with holding Hamas's grip on Gaza at risk is that they 'believe that Israel will not seek to destroy Hamas' ability to rule in the Gaza Strip; rather, Israel will focus on degrading Hamas', as well as that of other Gaza based Resistance groups, military capabilities and infrastructures. Therefore, Hamas is likely to continue fighting until it achieves its goals and as long it does not foresee an existential threat.' They assert that this belief 'has in fact given Hamas an opportunity to escalate the conflict without feeling that it is risking its survival.' To counter Hamas's sense of security, the authors argue Israel must become less predictable: '[W]hen Israel launched the 2006 campaign [in Lebanon] following the abduction of two IDF soldiers, Hezbollah felt that Israel "had gone crazy." This lesson shattered Hezbollah's previous conception and proved that Israel's actions cannot be foreseen. This is what has primarily deterred Hezbollah since 2006, and what has spared both sides additional suffering and bloodshed. Hamas — unlike Hezbollah, which is undoubtedly watching the events and learning from Israel's conduct in the current conflict — is still convinced that Israel's tactics are predictable.'⁴⁷

Variations in motivation within the organization and over time

All this suggests that Hamas does have vulnerabilities than can be exploited for deterrence purposes. Furthermore, motivation is not consistent across members and time. Trager and Zagorcheva put forth a model for determining potential deterrence approaches and outcomes based on the intensity of a non-state militant group's

⁴⁷ Uzi Rabi and Harel Chorev, "To Deter Hamas: Expect the Unexpected," *The World Post*, August 12, 2014, US edition, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/uzi-rabi/israel-hamas-ceasefire_b_5673068.html.

motivations and the extent to which its goals can be accommodated. Israel cannot, of course, accommodate Hamas's overall goal of dismantling the State of Israel itself. In addition, Hamas appears highly motivated following Trager and Zagorcheva's definition of 'high' motivation as present when militants 'value goals over life'. The best that can be hoped for in such a circumstance is deterrence by denial and temporary deterrence by punishment.⁴⁸ This temporary deterrence can be expanded, however, because not all elements of a militant organization may be equally motivated or have goals that are equally at odds with a given state's interests. Those willing to provide finance to non-state groups like Hamas may be less ideologically motivated and certain than their counterparts within the organization, opening them up to measures designed to deter them from cooperation with actors like Hamas. 'State sponsors represent another element of terrorist systems that many view as less motivated and easier to find, and therefore susceptible to deterrence. Scholars and policymakers who are skeptical of using deterrence against terrorists often believe that, on the contrary, their state sponsors are deterrable. The Bush administration's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism contains a long discussion of the administration's policy of deterring state sponsors of terrorism.'⁴⁹ It is notable that Israel's neighbours Jordan and Egypt do not, at least officially, share Hamas's goal of destroying Israel and many other states in the region, despite their sometimes fiery rhetoric, show little real interest in getting dragged into battles with Israel.

Targeting states sponsoring or hosting militant groups is sometimes called 'indirect deterrence' and was discussed in the previous chapter and will feature prominently in the next. Even before the rise of Hamas, however, Israel had a long

48 Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005): 95.

49 Ibid., 97.

history of targeting states that allowed non-state actors to act in ways Israel found unacceptable. From the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948 until the Suez War in 1956, Israel battled infiltration from Jordan and Egypt. Unable to defend the entire length of its serpentine border, Israel retaliated for infiltrations against targets in Jordan and Egypt. '[then Israeli Chief of General Staff Moshe] Dayan and Shimon Peres both strongly believed that, especially given the configuration of the frontier, to try to police it would be both futile and a strategic error' by moving too many resources to the border.⁵⁰ As Dayan put it in 1955: 'We cannot guard every water pipeline from explosion, and every tree from uprooting. We cannot prevent every murder of a worker in an orchard, or a family in their beds. But it is in our power to set a high price on our blood, a price too high for the Arab community, the Arab army or the Arab government to think it worth paying.'⁵¹ The extent to which these attempts to coerce foreign governments to halt infiltration remains a subject of fierce debate in Israel,⁵² though it can be noted that infiltrations did fall to a very low level after 1956.

There are also avenues for direct deterrence, at least at the tactical and operational levels. Even highly motivated Hamas militants who would not be deterrable in the final moments before an attack may be deterrable at earlier stages when 'the prospects of achieving a successful attack are more uncertain'. This is because '[e]ven those willing to give their lives when the success of an attack is assured may be unwilling to begin a process that may not, in the end, advance their cause'.⁵³ This is a

50 Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 38.

51 Quoted in: Byman, *A High Price*, 21.

52 On the "no" side, see, for example: Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1993); Ze'ev Drory, *Israel's Reprisal Policy, 1953-1956: The Dynamics of Military Retaliation* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005); On the "yes" side, see, for example: Mordechai Bar-On, "Small Wars, Big Wars: Security Debates during Israel's First Decade," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 2 (September 25, 2012): 107-27; Uri Bar-Joseph, "Variations on a Theme: The Conceptualization of Deterrence in Israeli Strategic Thinking," *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 145-81.

53 Trager and Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," 98.

particularly salient observation when it comes to deterrence by denial and the security barrier. For all its imperfections, the evidence strongly suggests that it deters a high percentage of attacks against Israel (see chapter 5). Denial has wider effects, too. Because it ‘can minimize the terrorists’ power to hurt thereby lessening the coercive power of terrorist action. This in turn reduces terrorist motivation, increasing the effectiveness’ of other forms of deterrence.⁵⁴

Hamas survival and sources of legitimacy: Politics, Palestinian public opinion, and control of territory

Whatever views Hamas espouses, it must survive as an organization to continue to espouse and fight for them, meaning it has an interest in avoiding Israeli actions that would threaten its very survival. Hamas may be willing to risk the lives of its members or leaders on the individual level, but its survival would be in graver danger were it to take such losses that its control of Gaza became threatened. There is a precedent for this: ‘The PLO’s loss of its autonomous territorial base in Lebanon as a result of the Israeli incursion into that country in 1982 generated mounting ideological and structural crises within the organization, which had effectively been deprived of the military option and had its political option severely curtailed by being forced out of Lebanon.’⁵⁵ Hamas survived without controlling territory for many years, but losing Gaza would represent a massive setback for Hamas’s agenda, in terms of both its social goals and political goals. An onslaught that would remove Hamas from power be difficult to accomplish without re-occupying the Gaza Strip, which Israel fears would bring unacceptable consequences with it. One Israeli army official claimed the daily attrition in Gaza would

⁵⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁵ Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 14.

make Israel 'long for southern Lebanon', even as massive unrest would likely also erupt in the West Bank.⁵⁶ Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon justified his opposition to retaking the Strip, saying 'if we had gone for such a move, we would still be bringing back bodies (of soldiers) and (terrorists) would still be launching rockets at Israel'.⁵⁷ Israel is thus unlikely to re-occupy the Gaza Strip unless the security situation on its southern border deteriorates massively. Israel does not necessarily need to remove Hamas from power physically, however. Hamas has long recognized that its strength also relies on support from the Palestinian public. It also sees winning the support of the majority as instrumental to its goal of Islamizing society. Israel may be able to influence Gazan and Palestinian support for Hamas.

As Gunning notes, 'Lack of popular support for political violence was indeed one of the factors leading Hamas to focus on social and political activities towards the end of the 1990s.'⁵⁸ Shlomi Eldar, an Israeli journalist who has covered Gaza and Hamas for years, asserts that Hamas responds to public opinion: 'If the public doesn't support their activities, they wait or do something different.'⁵⁹ Hamas expert Benedetta Berti agrees. Speaking of Hamas's internal decision making in the mid-1990s, she asserts that 'the more Hamas's popularity goes down the more support for armed attacks declines. I think Hamas is rational and responded to this public opinion.'⁶⁰ 'As a religious and national movement self-perceived as the sole moral and political alternative to the existing order, Hamas had to maintain its radical image, which is

56 Daniel Byman, "Five Bad Options for Gaza," *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 37–53, doi:10.1080/0163660X.2014.1002153; Itamar Sharon, "Cabinet Told Purging Gaza of Terror Would Take 5 Years, Cost Hundreds of Soldiers' Lives," *The Times of Israel*, August 6, 2014, Online edition, sec. Israel & the region, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/purging-gaza-of-terror-would-take-5-years-cabinet-was-told/>.

57 Times of Israel Staff, "Ya'alon: If We'd Occupied Gaza, We'd Still Be Bringing Bodies Home," *The Times of Israel*, March 14, 2015, Online edition, sec. Israel & the region, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/yaalon-defends-idfs-decision-not-to-reoccupy-gaza/>.

58 Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence*, 47.

59 Shlomi Eldar, Author interview via Skype, February 26, 2014.

60 Benedetta Berti, Author interview, Skype, March 16, 2014.

identified with a strategy of all-out confrontation. Yet as a social movement, Hamas had to take into account local considerations.’⁶¹

Hamas’s desire for public acceptance goes beyond immediate concerns over its relevance in the landscape of Palestinian political and armed groups. It sees popular support as essential to ensuring that fallible temporal leaders remain on the correct path, so Hamas is likely to continue to care about public opinion. In fact, it is dogmatically invested in mechanisms to maintain legitimacy:

In recognition of the fallible nature of human beings and the corrupting influence of power, Hamas proposes a number of checks and balances. It proposes regular elections to ensure that legislators and the government remain accountable to the electorate who must “watch over the performance of their representatives”. It advocates a separation of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches and expects each branch to scrutinise the other two. If the executive branch has lost the trust of the *Shura* Council, the latter would have the right to disband the former following a (weighted) majority vote. If any member of the executive, legislative or judiciary branches is accused in a court of law, that member would have to undergo trial like any other citizen. The notion of political immunity is condemned because those in power are believed to be particularly prone to power’s corrupting influence.⁶²

Furthermore, an ‘Islamic state must be “willed” by the people, and can only come about if a clear majority support its establishment. If it is enforced, it ceases to be an Islamic state.’⁶³ Maintaining public support is therefore not just about monitoring fallible leaders, it is also a tool for creating a sort of Islamic renaissance. As Gunning explains, ‘Consultation, then, becomes a process of socialisation, rather than an exercise in empowerment and direct democracy.’⁶⁴ Maintaining public support is therefore essential for Hamas and it has been a source of strength. It is also a weakness, however, because if the Palestinian public comes to disagree with Hamas violence, Hamas begins

61 Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 151.

62 Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence*, 58.

63 Ibid., 60.

64 Ibid., 91.

to lose legitimacy, endangering its strength and continued ability to rule and attract recruits.

The fact that Hamas currently controls territory is also important, as Gazans now hold Hamas at least partly responsible for conditions there. In addition, 'It is a widely held view in Israeli defence and security circles that terrorist organizations per se lack the organizational characteristics and assets that can be threatened in order to achieve deterrence, but as they develop social, political, or state-like manifestations, they become more susceptible to deterrence.'⁶⁵ In the earlier phases of Hamas's existence, it lacked such 'state-like manifestations'. This left Israel reliant on attempts to disrupt Hamas and to deter it indirectly, which, as the model in the last chapter shows, can be a difficult task involving more compellence than deterrence. Hamas has always had social institutions that were vulnerable to attack or confiscation, however, and these are critical to Hamas's goal of Islamizing Palestinian society. Israel generally avoided shutting down such institutions in areas under its control during the 1990s because this would have caused a backlash. Indirect deterrence can open alternative avenues, however, and Arafat had fewer reservations about shutting down Hamas social institutions. Hamas founder Sheikh Yassin responded by remarking that even 'Israel never dared to close these associations when I headed them or even afterwards' (see chapter 4).⁶⁶ Even without territory, then, Hamas has thus long had assets that can be 'held at risk' when attempting to deter the group or compel it to halt violence.⁶⁷

Since the 'indirect deterrence' days of the 1990s, Hamas has also increasingly been subject to Israel's attempts to deter and compel it directly. When the indirect

65 Shmuel Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah," *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (December 13, 2007): 469–93, doi:10.1080/01495930701750307.

66 "Sheikh Yassin Denounces Closing of HAMAS Institutions," *Agence France Presse -- English*, October 2, 1997, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

67 Trager and Zagorcheva note that such non-state assets can be the key to deterring terror groups in general. See: Trager and Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done."

deterrence of Hamas collapsed at the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Israel eventually attempted to compel Hamas directly to curtail violence, rather than relying on the Palestinian Authority (PA) to rein in the group. In addition to the West Bank security barrier, which was intended to effect direct defence and deterrence-by-denial, Israel began targeted killings of Hamas military and political leaders in an attempt to coerce them into halting violence. The challenges and effectiveness of both tactics are discussed in chapter 5. Finally, since Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, the group has had ample 'state-like manifestations' that are now subject to Israel's direct deterrence reprisals. As one official at the time explained: 'The bank of targets has grown tremendously with Hamas's takeover. Hamas is a clear and defined enemy and that means that when we decide to respond it will be easier than before since all their buildings are now targets as is anyone walking around with a weapon.'⁶⁸ This means that deterring Hamas has since 2007 in many ways been more akin to deterring a neighbouring state than to deterring a shadowy non-state network. Hamas's control of Gaza means it now has a stake in the status quo and gains it wishes to avoid losing. This in theory should make it easier to deter and is examined more closely in chapter 6. All the factors discussed in this section suggest ways in which Israel can counter the extensive level of motivation Hamas members have, ways around the rigidity that Hamas's ideology and religious underpinnings provide, and that Hamas's religiosity does not make Hamas irrational nor necessarily rigid to the point of being undeterrable. Not all of Hamas is based in the Gaza Strip and subject to Israeli air strikes, however. It's de-centralized structure and dispersed leadership pose additional deterrence challenges. Furthermore, in its earliest days, it did not control territory that could be

68 Yaakov Katz, "Israel's Main Options: Disconnect Totally from Gaza or Talk to Hamas. Security Chiefs Discount Notion of Invading Strip to Try and Help Fatah," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 15, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.

held at risk. These factors present additional challenges to deterrence that are covered in the next section.

3.3 Deterrability: Organizational structure, internal divisions, and the problem of multiple ‘return addresses’

The above section illustrated the ways in which Hamas’s *raison d’être* and religious beliefs affect its deterrability and showed that, although Hamas’s reason for being is closely tied to violent resistance against Israel and this resistance is stiffened by its religious beliefs, the group is not entirely inflexible nor immune to coercion. The lack of ‘state-like manifestations’ in its earlier years noted in the above section led to an additional complication however: a version of the so-called ‘return-address’ problem, whereby non-state groups often lack specific targets that can be held at risk for coercive purposes. Hamas does now have ample physical assets Israel can target. Its structure, however, makes ‘decapitation’ (taking out its senior leadership) difficult. In addition, the geographic spread of its leaderships, the sharing of responsibilities between them, and the autonomy of Hamas’s militant cells all mean that there are multiple ‘return addresses’ for deterrence or compellence messages targeted towards Hamas. Finally, threats to endanger Hamas’s political, national, and religious programme by threatening its survival ring hollow when some of its most important leaders are abroad and it has cells scattered not only in Gaza, but in the Israeli-controlled West Bank.

As Trager and Zagorcheva point out, the ‘return address’ problem does not mean that attempts at deterrence must fail, only that it is important to match demands states make to the level and types of threat they can reasonably bring to bear.⁶⁹ Further, there

⁶⁹ Trager and Zagorcheva, “Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done,” 108.

are interests shared by every part of the Hamas organization and the evidence suggests that, despite considerable autonomy, Hamas's militant cells do respond to queues from the political leadership. This ensures Hamas a level of discipline necessary to sustain it, but it also means it is more deterrable than a group lacking any sort of leadership hierarchy. Finally, there is evidence that killing senior members of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank affects Hamas's decisions and can lead the group to reduce attacks under certain circumstances (see chapter 5).

Hamas has structured itself to make it less susceptible to attacks on its internal leadership: 'to safeguard against "decapitation" ... the political, social and resistance wings were separated (although the charities had always been somewhat autonomous, as they included non-members in their advisory boards). In 1991-2, the "Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades were established, and by then, a leadership structure had been created in the Diaspora, initially under the umbrella of the joint Palestinian-Jordanian Brotherhood, to ensure continuity when the internal leadership was in prison."⁷⁰ One of the external leadership's primary responsibilities became raising funds for the Qassam Brigades. 'Its success in doing so increased the tensions between the internal and external leaderships as the latter came to *de facto* control the Qassam Brigades through their control over funding.'⁷¹ At the same time, however, this initially ensured that the Qassam Brigades were reliant on the external political leadership, making them more likely to respond to its instructions. This did not always ensure disciplined, hierarchical control, however: 'The relationship between the internal and external leaderships was further complicated by the increasing autonomy of the Qassam Brigades. Established with the specific purpose to prevent detection, the Brigades were highly decentralised.

70 Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence*, 40.

71 Ibid.

Already during the first Intifada, this created tensions when individual cells carried out actions without authorisation from the leadership—particularly against collaborators.’⁷² Such concerns have resurfaced since 2007, after which the Qassam Brigades developed a new source of financing: taxes on smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. As Benedetta Berti of Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies explained, ‘one of the unintended and very unfortunate consequences of the siege is that it has boosted this underground, informal tunnel economy, paradoxically empowering Hamas because Hamas runs the tunnels. There’s a tunnel ministry, you get a permit, they regulate the construction, they collect taxes from it. And... a lot of the tunnels are run by Hamas’s military wing, so the Qassam Brigades are making money directly, which means there’s also potential for inter-organizational strife.’⁷³

Overall, however, it is difficult to point to any action taken by the Qassam Brigades against Israel that was definitely or even most likely not sanctioned by the external leadership. When the political leadership, particularly the external branch, agrees to a ceasefire, the Qassam Brigades maintain quiet and even enforce that quiet with regard to other armed groups (see chapter 6). As one Israeli expert with a security background told the author, Hamas’s chain of command is ‘pretty strong. When political leaders make a decision, Hamas’s “army” responds.’⁷⁴ On closer examination, cases in which there was media speculation about ‘rogue’ Qassam Brigades cells or internal divisions turn out to be better explained by the Brigades’ autonomy and to be in line with the external leadership’s public statements.⁷⁵ The 2014 abduction and murder of three Israeli teens in the West Bank is one example. It occurred just as the internal

⁷² Ibid., 41.

⁷³ Benedetta Berti, Author interview in person, February 20, 2013.

⁷⁴ Expert on Israeli policy, Author interview in person, January 31, 2013.

⁷⁵ For an example of the “rogue” hypothesis, see: Shlomi Eldar, “Accused Kidnappers Are Rogue Hamas Branch,” *Al-Monitor*, June 29, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/qawasmeh-clan-hebron-hamas-leadership-mahmoud-abbas.html>.

leadership in Gaza was making conciliatory noises and had recently agreed to the formation of a unity government with Fatah. Conditions were quiet. The teens' sudden abduction seemed to defy all logic, but it was not long before evidence arose of wider planning of the attack, suggesting it was not merely the work of a 'rogue cell'.

Furthermore, statements made by Hamas leaders, including external leader Khaled Meshaal, in the days and months leading up to the attack suggest the external political leadership was signalling to the Brigades that they should take action (also covered in chapter 6).⁷⁶ This shows that the interests of the internal and external leaderships can diverge, but it also indicates a high degree of discipline within the chain of command from the external leadership to the Qassam Brigades, which means the Brigades should be deterrable by targeting messages at Hamas's external leadership. This internal/external divergence of interests presents its own problems, however.

Israelis therefore believe that the external leadership has been the main body that steers overall decisions to attack since at least the deaths of Sheikh Yassin and Abdel Azziz Rantissi. The internal leadership in Gaza, meanwhile, is essentially uninvolved:

Let's say the politburo decides it's time to carry out a terror attack against Israel because of certain political circumstances. It will give the order to Damascus military HQ. They'll say it's time to do something significant. They might say it should be in Israel or limited to the [Palestinian] Territories. The military HQ will translate that into practical action and give orders to cells 'inside', who decide the target and location. Haniyeh and Zahar are not directly involved in attacks.⁷⁷

76 Hamas PM Haniyeh encouraged the Brigades to kidnap Israeli soldiers in April 2014: "Kidnapping Israeli Soldiers 'Top Priority' Hamas Says," April 16, 2014, <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/insideisrael/2014/April/Kidnapping-Israeli-Soldiers-Top-Priority-Hamas-says/>; This was followed in May by a speech by Meshal in which he stated that Hamas prisoners' problems would be solved by the Qassam Brigades, possibly a signal to the group to carry out an operation: YAAKOV LAPPIN, "Mashaal's Speech May Have Been Signal for Kidnapping," *Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2014, sec. NEWS; Finally, Hamas spokesman Hussam Badran specifically called on the Brigades in the West Bank to target Israeli soldiers and settlers just days before the kidnapping: Elhanan Miller, "Hamas Calls on Armed Wing to Kill Soldiers and Settlers," *The Times of Israel*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-calls-on-armed-wing-to-kill-soldiers-and-settlers/>.

77 An "Israeli government analyst" quoted in Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 114.

This can complicate decisions on calibrating responses to Hamas attacks. The 2014 kidnapping example is again illustrative. The Gazan leadership denied all knowledge of the plot, despite the fact that Hamas's external leadership had recently called for further abductions. It is entirely possible that the Gazan leadership was telling the truth. This may be why Israel initially responded with restraint in Gaza. After all, if the leadership in Gaza is not responsible, attacking Gaza seems questionable. Furthermore, attacking Gaza can mean hitting moderates rather than hardliners. In 2006, around the time when the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was kidnapped, an elder member of Hamas's leadership admitted that there were divisions between hardliners and pragmatists within the movement. He noted: '[Gaza-based Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail] Haniyeh is from the pragmatic school, but there is great pressure on him from the hardliners.'⁷⁸

There are reasons that Gaza can serve as a return-address for all of Hamas, however. Hamas keeps a close watch on Palestinian public opinion, linking even its external leadership to the Palestinian Territories. 'One of the conditions of legitimate authority in Hamas' Islamic state is that a leader consults the people. Hamas roots this in various Qur'anic injunctions where either the Prophet exhorts his followers to consult or God exhorts the Prophet to consult his companions. So significant does Hamas deem this command that it often calls its version of an Islamic state "*shura* democracy". It considers elections central to the consultative process.'⁷⁹ The external leadership is thus unlikely ever simply to ignore Gazan opinion when the Strip is attacked, as this would even violate its reading of the Quran. This means that the intermediate audience for Israel's retaliations is the Palestinian public. If they become convinced that Hamas's

⁷⁸ Ibid., 128–9.

⁷⁹ Gunning, *Hamas in Politics Democracy, Religion, Violence*, 59.

hardline approach is bringing more hardship than benefits and is not going to work, Hamas could find itself toppled if Palestinians encounter a viable alternative to Hamas's message (though such an alternative has yet to emerge).

Hamas also sees politics as a potential tool for effecting change. This tool cannot be used if it loses the support of the Palestinian public. Though their interests diverge, both the internal and external leaderships want Hamas to retain control of Gaza. Benedetta Berti, who specializes in the political integration of militant groups, argues that 'institutional pressures to expand and accommodate, in response to a legitimacy and relevancy threat' and 'a decline in the availability of mobilization resources' are two reasons groups may decide to engage in politics. Both of these suggest tough measures or constant denial of success may encourage a militant group to seek less violent means of advancing its agenda. In a parallel with Schelling's 'conciliatory promise, however, she also notes that this must be combined with an 'opening' of the political system that makes the group's participation feasible.⁸⁰ What the opponent can gain (or avoid losing) through deciding to be deterred must be greater than what the opponent can get (or avoid losing) through escalation, and this includes intangible elements like face, honour, and legitimacy. As Berti cautions, political integration has not tended to lead inexorably to groups' moderation. Instead, she described the process as 'cyclical' with groups alternating between more moderate periods of political engagement and more violent ones of militancy and escalation.⁸¹

The importance to Hamas of its control of Gaza and of public opinion there mean that threats or attacks directed at Hamas's 'interior' can be effective, despite the internal/external divide and militant cell autonomy. The fact that there are multiple

80 Benedetta Berti, *Armed Political Organizations: From Conflict to Integration*, Kindle edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), chap. Conclusion.

81 Ibid.

recipients of deterrent signals does however mean that messages directed at Hamas must be clear and directed at all levels of the organization. Large-scale attacks on the Gaza Strip send clear messages to Hamas, though open admissions that Israel does not wish to topple Hamas may blunt their effects.⁸² Messages in the form of actual words, however, are more subtle. Shmuel Bar, an Israeli academic with a background in security, suggests a way in which those messages can be made clear as well: Send a ‘caricature of a message’ to ensure all levels of Hamas take notice. A ‘leaked document’ (fake or intentionally leaked) with Israeli plans to invade the Gaza Strip is one such possible message.⁸³ Israel thus has techniques at its disposal to overcome the ‘return address’ problem Hamas’s organizational structure represents. Chapter 6 presents evidence that the targeting of the Gaza Strip in general as Hamas’s return address has met with considerable, if imperfect, success, while chapters 4 and 5 show the other methods Israel has used to target Hamas despite its lack of territory that could be held at risk.

3.4 Conclusion

Hamas’s *raison-d’être*, ideology, and structure all present challenges for Israeli deterrence. These challenges are not inherently insurmountable, however, and these factors also present certain opportunities. Hamas exists to resist Israel. Negotiation backed by the threat of force can be successful if the result of abandoning the negotiated status quo would be worse than maintaining it, however, as a deal struck between the American and Philippine governments and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front shows.

82 In 2014, for example, the Israeli government openly stated that it did not plan to topple Hamas. This was also made clear during previous escalations (see chapter 6). Herb Keinon, “Livni: No Policy to Reoccupy Gaza, but If Rockets Don’t Stop, ‘All Options on Table,’” *www.JPost.com*, July 21, 2014, sec. Operation Protective Edge, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Livni-No-policy-to-reoccupy-Gaza-but-if-rockets-dont-stop-all-options-on-table-367171>.

83 Bar, interview.

That deal accommodated some of the group's local political demands in exchange for abandoning others and renouncing any cooperation with Al Qaeda.⁸⁴ Hamas cannot be seen to surrender the cause of fighting Israel if it wishes to remain relevant, but even long-term ceasefires with Israel are permissible and would allow Hamas to claim to be holding true to its resistance principles. Put in another way: There is scope to encourage Hamas to relinquish its short-to medium-term goal of carrying out violence against Israel in exchange for allowing it remain in control of Gaza and to retain its relevance. Hamas, like any organization, cannot carry out its mission if it is too weak or goes out of existence altogether. While it is true that Hamas does not need to 'win' against Israel in any given battle, it does need to remain operationally viable. Credible threats to weaken Hamas severely can therefore have an effect, but these must be backed with credible promises to leave Hamas in a state it is willing to accept in the meantime if it refrains from violence. That is what the successful, medium-term tactical deterrence of Hamas would look like.

There may be possibilities beyond this tactical deterrence as well. Hamas's ideological commitment never to recognize Israel's right to exist is rigid and unlikely to be abandoned, but its commitment to '*shura* democracy' provides a way to loosen that commitment. By agreeing to abide by the results of a referendum, Hamas also implicitly opens the door to long-term peace and even potentially to serving in a government that recognizes Israel as long as Hamas need not officially do so and can remain committed to its goal of eventual 'liberation' of Palestine from Israeli control. The question of what would happen after a long-term *hudna* is an open one; there are just as many reasons the Palestinian public might move away from Hamas and resistance during a long-term peace as there are that it would move towards it. Hamas's ideology and strong

84 Trager and Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," 118.

motivation pose challenges, but they do not make deterrence impossible. Furthermore, Hamas's desire for relevance, public support, and even control of territory mean that the divides between its internal and external leadership and between its political and military wings do not pose insurmountable obstacles to deterrence, either. Hamas's effective control of the Gaza Strip remains a vulnerability. Even before it gained control of the Strip, however, there were several approaches open to Israel for curbing Hamas, including indirect deterrence, denial, and compellence through targeted killings.

The rest of this thesis moves on from the theoretical to the practical and analyses Israeli policy towards Hamas in three phases: During the First Intifada and the 'Oslo' years, the Second Intifada until the takeover of Gaza, and from the takeover of Gaza until mid-2014. These three phases correspond to very different conditions with regard to deterrence. During much of the first phase, Israel saw the primary threat as emanating from Fatah and the PLO. This meant it initially did not even attempt to deter Hamas. Later in the period, the signing of the Oslo Accords with Yassir Arafat changed the calculus and opened the door to potential 'indirect deterrence' via the Palestinian Authority (chapter 4). When Israel could no longer rely on the PA to reign in Hamas during the Second Intifada, it began to try more direct methods, despite Hamas's lack of 'state-like characteristics' that it could target (chapter 5). In the final period, Hamas's acquisition of territory meant that deterring it had become a much more 'traditional' task akin to deterring a neighbouring state—albeit one with a leadership abroad out of Israel's reach (chapter 6). Throughout the three chapters, the thesis will examine Israel's use and attempted use of indirect and direct deterrence-by-punishment, deterrence-by-denial, and compellence and ask how effective these tactics were/have been in reducing violence or maintaining calm. At each stage, it will also take into account other factors

that may have had an impact on violence to arrive at a probabilistic assessment of deterrence success and begin to investigate ways in which that deterrence might have been improved. The main subject of the first of these chapters is indirect deterrence, which was arguably the main plank of Israel's approach to Hamas during much of the 1990s.

4. Hamas's First Decade: Tolerance, Disruption, and Indirect Deterrence, 1987 to 2000

The last chapter showed that Israel has used deterrence since before the state was even founded. This was often by necessity rather than by choice: Israel's long borders and low population density meant that halting through defensive measures infiltrations from Jordan and Egypt, for example, was impracticable. Prior to that, during British rule, military weakness placed limits on Jews' ability to control the territory: 'holding out and retaliating was all that Haganah had prepared for'.¹ Crucially, even as Israel sought to deter neighbouring Arab states, it also attempted to deter non-state actors, mostly individuals and small, unorganized groups, from crossing the border into the newly established state. It attempted to do this mostly through a tactic known as 'indirect deterrence'. Israel would hit civilian or military targets in the neighbouring states' territories in response to infiltrations. This, in turn, would encourage the state directly, or via the local people targeted in reprisals, to work to halt infiltrations. As this was an attempt to make its opponents *do* something, rather than *refrain* from doing something, this was a form of compellence. As theory would suggest, compellence success was difficult to achieve: Compliance was blatant and humiliating and Israel's reprisals could easily be viewed as disproportionate attacks to be resisted, even at high cost. Nevertheless, Israel did achieve some successes with this tactic.

As the politics of the Israel-Palestinian conflict began to shift during the Oslo peace process in the 1990s, Israel entered the first of the three distinct deterrence

¹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 72.

periods set out in the introduction. It would now find itself again attempting indirect deterrence, as it had in the period covered in chapter 2, but this time of Hamas. The same challenges it had faced in earlier times were repeated. Israel had to encourage and, especially later, attempt to compel one group (the Palestinian Authority) to rein in another group (Hamas) without instead sparking escalation. Because the peace process required close cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) on shared territory, Israel had to be more sensitive than in other cases towards not humiliating the PA or its leader, Yasser Arafat. Finally, as a democracy, Israeli leaders faced opposing pressures: Working closely with the PA and showing it sensitivity risked looking like appeasing an enemy. Israel's Labour Party constantly had to worry about its electoral prospects should it appear too soft. At the same time, Hamas was in an excellent position to spoil the peace process with violence by intensifying the choice of Israeli politicians between sensitivity towards the PA and pressure from the Israeli public for greater security. This chapter will argue first that the alignment of interests between Israel and the PA brought about by the Oslo Accords first provoked Hamas into violently expressing its opposition. It initially did this easily in the absence of indirect deterrence and before Israel and the PA could adapt to their new partnership. Second, it will argue that the PA began to understand in the mid-1990s the threat that Hamas posed to its prospects of becoming the government of an independent Palestinian state. This led it into a precarious indirect deterrence relationship with Israel in the mid-1990s that began to take effect in the late 1990s and eventually led to Hamas ceasing its terror attacks altogether in 2000 (see figures 4.1 and 4.3).² This alignment of interests between the PA and Israel meant that the fortunes of the calm at the end of the 1990s and into

² The number of casualties peaked in 1997 (a year after the number killed) due to two particularly catastrophic attacks in July and September 1997, which each wounded more than 150 people. The number killed in the attacks was also high (15 and 6, respectively), but not altogether remarkable.

2000 were tied to those of the peace process. Should the peace process fail, so would the indirect deterrence of Hamas.

Hamas attacks prior to Al-Aqsa Intifada

(Up to 28 September 2000 inclusive)

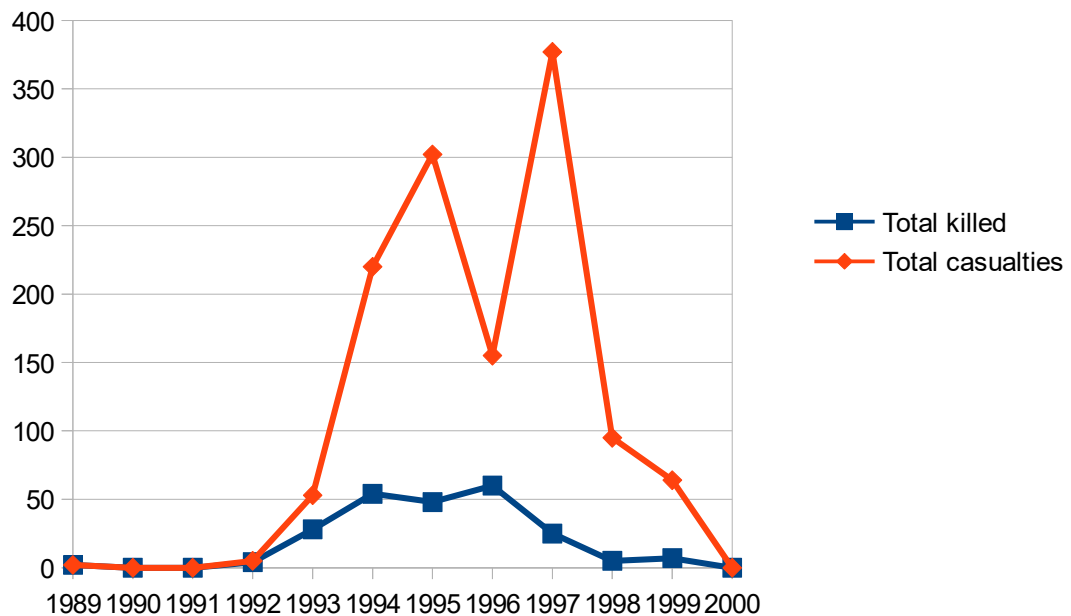


Figure 4.1: Total casualties and deaths in Hamas terror attacks (including kidnappings) from 1989 to 28 September 2000.³

Deterrence would fail if the peace process failed because, as figure 1.4 in the introduction showed, the task of attempting ‘indirect deterrence’ of Hamas required that the PA’s interests be aligned with those of Israel. Both the PA and Hamas, furthermore, had to prefer the status quo to escalation (or in Hamas’s case potentially be too weakened to challenge it regardless). Israel had less influence over ‘pull’ factors (ability and willingness to counter attacks) in this indirect situation than it would have in a

³ Charles Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks,” *Database of Hamas Terror Attacks*, January 2015, www.hamasterrordatabase.com Note: “Killed” and “Casualty” figures for suicide attacks generally include the suicide attackers themselves, though this was not always clear from the sources used.

direct deterrence situation: The pull factors were characteristics of the proxy (the PA), rather than of Israel itself. Israel thus had to ensure that the PA's interests remained aligned with its own and that the PA was willing and able to counter Hamas, all while avoiding antagonizing Hamas or the PA any more than necessary. This required Israel to walk several fine lines.

4.1 Hamas's roots in the Muslim Brotherhood and its birth in the First Intifada

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1960s. He became the group's leader in Gaza in 1968.⁴ After Israel took over control of the Gaza Strip in 1967, Yassin found himself in a more accepting environment than that under Egyptian rule. 'Israel... permitted the creation of voluntary or non-governmental organizations [in the West Bank and Gaza] such as charitable, educational and other forms of privately funded service institutions. ...[It was] a policy of "non-intervention" drawn up and supervised by Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Defence.'⁵ Israel did not at that time consider the Brotherhood's social and religious activities a threat because they were non-violent and did not get involved in politics. In addition, the organization had few adherents in the 1960s, a time when support for the Pan-Arabism of Egypt's President Nasser was high and membership in Fatah was expanding.⁶

In 1973, Israel officially recognized Yassin's organization Mujama Al-Islamiya

4 There is disagreement about exactly when. Tamimi asserts that he joined in "1966 or 1967" after being arrested by the Egyptians in Gaza for allegedly already belonging to the banned group. Others, like Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, suggest that he was indeed already a member at the time of his arrest. See: Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007), 16; Shaul Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 17; *ibid.*, 19.

5 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 37–38.

6 *Ibid.*, 17.

(the Islamic Centre), which founded an Islamic university and set up mosques, clubs, and schools.⁷ Far from deterrence or disruption, Israel's policy towards the organization that would later spawn Hamas was one of at least tacit acceptance and possibly even active promotion. Former Israeli official Avner Cohen has remarked that traditional Muslim clerics in Gaza as early as the 1970s had warned him that Yassin was dangerous and 'ultimately more interested in politics than faith'. Brigadier General Yitzhak Segev, too, has said that, by 1979 at the latest, Israel was aware of Yassin's anti-Israel rhetoric. Nevertheless, Fatah was Israel's main enemy at the time, as Yassin 'was still 100% peaceful'.⁸ In 1981, New York Times journalist David Shipler even quoted Segev as saying 'the military government gives to the mosques', with Shipler relaying that 'the funds are used for both mosques and religious schools, with the purpose of strengthening a force that runs counter to the pro-P.L.O. Leftists.'⁹ Even in those early days, clashes between Islamists and secular leftists did indeed occur, a prelude to the rift between Hamas and the PLO that would eventually see Gaza and the West Bank ruled by separate, seemingly irreconcilable, authorities. Many Gazans at the time believed that Israel tacitly approved of Muslim religious groups' attacks on secular Palestinians and PLO supporters. One supporter remarked that Shin Bet (Israeli security) agents sat in a car and did nothing as fundamentalists attacked secular Palestinians in the Jabaliya camp in the northern Gaza Strip in 1986. 'The Israelis say these things are a domestic matter. Why should they bother to intervene when someone else is doing their dirty work for them?'¹⁰ Referring to Rabin's time as Defence Minister from 1984 to 1990,

7 Andrew Higgins, "How Israel Helped to Spawn Hamas," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB123275572295011847>; Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 36.

8 Higgins, "How Israel Helped to Spawn Hamas."

9 David K. Shipler, "Under Gaza's Calm Surface: Death, Drugs, Intrigue," *The New York Times*, March 28, 1981, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/03/28/world/under-gaza-s-calm-surface-death-drugs-intrigue.html>.

10 Ian Black, "Muslim Fundamentalists Add to Gaza's Misery," *The Guardian*, June 3, 1986.

Arafat himself claimed in 1993 that the rise of Hamas was Israel's fault: 'Rabin thought that by helping Hamas he could create competition for the PLO. Instead he created extremism.'¹¹ Just before the outbreak of the Intifada, however, Israel began to become concerned over the spread of Islamism in the Palestinian territories, particularly in Gaza, where the number of mosques had tripled from 200 to 600 in 20 years. The Muslim Brotherhood still did not call for violence as late as October 1987, but they did 'understand and condone it' when practised by others. It was also not lost on Israelis that the Brotherhood called for Arabs eventually to regain control of all the territory in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.¹² In addition, it was apparent that members of the more militant group Islamic Jihad were a product of the Islamization of Palestinian society driven by Yassin's Mujama, from which Islamic Jihad drew most of its recruits.¹³

According to Azzam Tamimi, a friend of the current head of Hamas's external leadership, Khaled Meshal, Yassin's initial non-violence was tactical rather than stemming from personal conviction. Quite simply, he surmised that Arabs in general, and Palestinians in particular, were too weak to win. In 1965, Yassin had refused to join the PLO in its fight against Israel because '[h]e saw no point in drawing [the Israelis and Arabs] into a duel that was most certainly going to end in [the Arabs'] defeat'.¹⁴ The Brotherhood believed that this weakness stemmed from a failure to live an Islamic way of life.¹⁵ As late as 1980, the organization was still insisting that the liberation of Palestine was too big a task for Palestinians themselves and that this could only be

11 David Brinn, "Arafat Blames Rabin for Rise of Hamas," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 19, 1993, sec. News.

12 Ian Murray, "Revival of Islam Brings New Spirit to Jaded Struggle: Islam and Israel - Part 1," *The Times*, October 12, 1987.

13 Ian Black, "Israelis Alarmed as Islamic Fundamentalism Tightens Its Hold on Occupied Gaza Strip," *The Guardian*, October 26, 1987, Nexis UK.

14 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 18.

15 *Ibid.*, 29.

accomplished by an Islamic state.¹⁶ Although Sheikh Yassin and a close circle of associates did receive funding from the Kuwait branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to purchase weapons and send men to Amman for training as fighters in 1982 and Brotherhood organizations from several countries met and agreed to provide financial and logistical support to the Brotherhood in Islam to wage jihad, the plot was soon uncovered and Yassin arrested.¹⁷ Israel still categorized the Mujamma as ‘non-violent’, however, and, perhaps because of this categorization, it released Yassin after less than a year in prison as part of a prisoner exchange with the PFLP.¹⁸

Israel was thus right that the Muslim Brotherhood’s activities in the Palestinian Territories were non-violent because the organization itself had not yet decided that an armed struggle with Israel was sensible, despite this initial attempt by Yassin to arm some of its members. Some of the organization’s leaders, ‘especially in the West Bank’, where its historical ties to Jordan tended to make it more moderate, argued that Yassin’s imprisonment showed how futile armed struggle against Israel was.¹⁹ One of those West Bank leaders was Sheikh Hassan Yousef, one of Hamas’s founding members. His son, Shin Bet mole Mosab Hassan Yousef, recalls: ‘My father did not oppose violence, but he didn’t think his people were in any position to take on the Israeli military.’²⁰ The fact that Israel’s military might led these leaders to conclude armed resistance was futile could be considered a sign that deterrence was working except that it seems mostly to have affected those who were already opposed to violence. Younger members of the group, who were educated within the Palestinian territories rather than in Jordan or Egypt, were ‘galvanized by the Iranian revolution and the Jihad in Afghanistan’ and

16 Ibid., 45.

17 Ibid.; *ibid.*, 46; Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 34.

18 Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 26; Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 47.

19 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 47.

20 Mosab Hassan Yousef and Ron Brackin, *Son of Hamas* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2010), 19.

were 'discontented with waiting'.²¹ The First Intifada would finally break this stalemate and move the group towards active resistance.

Hamas's first communiqué was released on 14 December 1987, five days after the outbreak of the Intifada.²² Hamas did not initially call for mass demonstrations, fearing a direct confrontation with Israeli security forces, but Yassin did instruct his followers to use firearms against the Israelis from the very beginning, provided these actions could not be traced back to Hamas. He also established 'strike groups... to carry out most of the daily Intifada activities, such as blocking roads, throwing stones, writing slogans and directives on walls, and enforcing Intifada directives on the population, including work strikes and not working in Israel'.²³

When it came, Israel's crackdown against Hamas began slowly. Hamas's first communiqué was unsigned, so Israel began by arresting known public figures associated with the Muslim Brotherhood who had extreme views.²⁴ Mahmoud Musleh, a Hamas member who worked to distribute the group's leaflets in the early days of the Intifada, attested that: 'It was difficult for the Israelis to find us, and it was only through later security breaches that they then made arrests.'²⁵ Israel had placed around 18,000 Palestinians in custody at various times since the beginning of the Intifada, but this did not amount to a significant crackdown against Hamas. This may simply be, as Musleh suggested, because Israeli did not have the intelligence.²⁶ Another possibility is that Israel hoped Hamas would weaken the uprising by causing internal strife among the

21 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 48.

22 Ibid., 55; Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24.

23 Mishal, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 55.

24 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 55.

25 Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010), 56.

26 John Kifner, "Islamic Fundamentalist Group Splitting Palestinian Uprising," *New York Times*, September 18, 1988.

Palestinians. At the time, ‘many Palestinians [maintained] that [Hamas was] being tolerated by the Israeli security forces in hopes of splitting the uprising, noting that such tactics [had] been used in the past in the Gaza Strip to set Islamic fundamentalists against Palestinian leftists.’ A Western diplomat agreed, saying ‘It is certainly remarkable with all these arrests, that someone like Sheik Ahmed Yassin, who just goes on saying the most awful things about Jews, isn’t touched’.²⁷ As far as Yassin goes, Azzam Tamimi asserts that Israel was not using Hamas, but lacked intelligence and was therefore allowing Yassin to remain free in order to ‘find out more about his activities and to monitor his movements and communications’ (a variant of the first possibility above).²⁸

If Israel wanted to pursue a ‘divide-and-conquer’ strategy, there was indeed a split between PLO and Hamas supporters that it could exploit.²⁹ Discussions between Palestinian factions showed disagreement about the best way forward. The division was not limited to PLO supporters endorsing political discussions with Israel and Islamists rejecting the idea of a settlement. There were also voices within the Muslim Brotherhood who spoke against using any violence in the protests who thereby stood in opposition to Hamas, which, though associated with the Brothers, encouraged violence from the beginning of the Intifada.³⁰

There is some evidence that Israel refrained from moving forcefully against Hamas in the first year of the Intifada, hoping to encourage infighting among the Palestinians. Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell assert that ‘[e]ven pro-Islamic newspapers complained about Hamas’s links to Israel. “For all the anti-Israeli

27 Ibid.

28 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 56.

29 Ian Black, “Israel Holds 200 in Gaza Raid,” *The Guardian* (1959-2003), September 10, 1988.

30 Nicolas Tatro, “Palestinians: United In the Street, Divided Over Peacemaking,” *The Associated Press*, March 4, 1988, PM Cycle edition, sec. International News.

rhetoric”, opined one editorial, “its [Hamas’s] efforts were dissipated in infighting rather than against the common enemy... The Israelis essentially followed the same policy towards Hamas as they followed against the Mujamma earlier: not suppressing it in the hope that it would distract young Palestinians from supporting more dangerous groups.”³¹ Mahmoud Zahar, a founding Hamas member, admits he met with Israeli officials at that time. In 1989, then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin also admitted that both he and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had met with ‘figures spanning the entire conceptual spectrum existing in the territories, from Islamic fundamentalists to very moderate individuals’. This ‘conceptual spectrum’ must have excluded the PLO, however, as Israeli law prohibited direct contact with its members and Israel criticized dialogue between it and the United States.³² Israel’s alleged tacit support also included funding: ‘The large amounts of money that were flowing into Hamas’s coffers from Muslim supporters abroad were ignored by the Israeli authorities, while the same authorities did everything they could to stem the dollars heading to the PLO.’³³

Raanan Gissin, who was a former media adviser to Ariel Sharon, asserts that Israel was following a deliberate policy of ‘divide and conquer’:

A broad consensus was that here is a religious movement that has great sway among the public and could actually, because of its animosity to Fatah, because of its policy of opposing the corruption of Fatah and all those manifestations of Fatah people taking money for their pocket, could serve a useful purpose in weakening the strength of Fatah on the street. That would benefit Israel in its struggle against Fatah. We are talking about before Oslo. The major leading terrorist group was Fatah. Statistically speaking, or in any way you look at it, they were responsible for the major terrorist attacks, they had the most sophisticated and largest terrorist organization. [Hamas] at that time was not involved in terrorist activity, didn’t even have a military arm... Later, when they started developing the military arm, I think

31 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 58.

32 Yitzhak Rabin, “Interview with Defense Minister Rabin on Israel Television -Arabic Service-- 27 July 1989,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Policy, 11–12: 1988–92, no. 85 (July 27, 1989), <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook8/Pages/85%20Interview%20with%20Defense%20Minister%20Rabin%20on%20Israel.aspx>; Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri, *The Fifty Years War: Israel and the Arabs* (London: Penguin Group and BBC Worldwide Ltd, 1998), 226.

33 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 58.

the Shabak [Shin Bet] was the first one to point out the change in their policy, or the fact that they were actually now becoming a terrorist organization.³⁴

By the end of 1988, disagreement between supporters of the PLO and those of Hamas was increasingly the cause of violence. As Israel rounded up large numbers of Palestinians and sent them to prison camps, Islamists and secularists were placed in detention together. After Hamas released its charter, clashes broke out in prison camps and PLO supporters refused to coordinate with members of Hamas, who often organized separate strike days, disrupting Palestinian unity. Many PLO supporters saw elements of Hamas's charter as a direct challenge to the pre-eminence of their organization.³⁵ Fist fights also broke out at times in the occupied territories when Hamas militants proclaimed and enforced (for example by burning tires and threatening shopkeepers) separate strikes from those called by the PLO.³⁶ Mosab Hassan Yousef recalls, 'If Hamas called a strike and threatened to burn the stores of anyone who stayed open, PLO leaders from across the street threatened to burn the stores of anyone who closed.'³⁷ Fatah was still the strongest faction, but it soon became clear that Islamist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, though fostering disunity, were central in intensifying the Intifada.³⁸ If Israel was attempting to sow division, there was certainly no sign that this was slowing the Intifada down.

Not everyone agrees with the assertion that Israel even tacitly supported Hamas

34 Ibid., 60.

35 Ibid., 57; For example, Article 13, which states "[Peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement", and Article 27, which calls the PLO a "father or brother", but says Hamas must oppose it because it is secular. See: "Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas," *The Jerusalem Fund*, accessed October 21, 2011, <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html>.

36 Glenn Frankel, "PLO-Fundamentalist Rift Seen in Occupied Territories," *The Washington Post*, September 6, 1988, Final edition, sec. First; Glenn Frankel, "200 Gazans Arrested in Israeli Army Sweep," *The Washington Post*, September 10, 1988, Final edition, sec. First.

37 Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 33.

38 Nicolas Tatro, "Islamic Militants Play Key Role in West Bank and Gaza Strip," *The Associated Press*, April 3, 1988, sec. International News.

during this period, however. Brigadier General Shalom Harari, who was a senior adviser on Palestinian affairs for the Ministry of Defence, has said: 'The only thing that you can accuse [Israel] of is that it started to treat [the Hamas problem] too late.' He also pointed out that Islamism was on the rise throughout the Middle East, not just in Israel.³⁹ After all, as Carmi Gillon, Head of Shin Bet from 1994 to 1996, explains: 'The number one terrorist enemy of Israel until the day that Arafat entered Gaza [after the signing of the Oslo Accord] was Fatah. All at once, Fatah left the circle of terror. Hamas and Islamic Jihad filled that vacuum.'⁴⁰

There were no attacks associated with Hamas until the end of 1988, when Hamas activists were involved in violent activities like throwing petrol bombs.⁴¹ The turning point was a more severe attack in February 1989, when Hamas militants, disguised as orthodox Jews, abducted and killed the Israeli soldier Avi Sasportas, who was hitchhiking within Israel proper. In this case, however, it was not initially clear who was responsible for the attack.⁴² The Israeli authorities did arrest Sheikh Yassin and fellow founding member Mahmoud al-Zahar, along with around 250 other Hamas members, in May 1989, but the charges against them included murdering Palestinian 'collaborators'—no mention was made of Sasportas's abduction.⁴³ It was not until November that any mention of Yassin in connection to Sasportas was made, suggesting that Israeli intelligence on Hamas was initially weak, though this would now change.⁴⁴

Many of the other Hamas members arrested were later released.

³⁹ Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 61.

⁴⁰ Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*, DVD, Documentary, (2013).

⁴¹ Joel Greenberg, "Homes of 2 Activists Demolished; 21 Injured in Clashes," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 3, 1989, sec. News, 2.

⁴² Michael Rotem and Michal Sela, "'Shallow Grave Prepared in Advance'. Body of Sasportas Found; Hunt for Sa'adon Continues," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 8, 1989, sec. News; Jon Immanuel, "Terrorist Given Life for Role in Soldiers' Deaths," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 7, 1991, sec. News.

⁴³ Michal Sela, "250 Islamic Activists Arrested by Army," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 22, 1989, sec. News.

⁴⁴ Michal Sela, "Gaza Hamas Leader, Kidnap-Murder Gang Suspects, Among 200 Indicted," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 1989, sec. News.

Whatever the reasons behind its initial policy, the kidnapping and murder of Avi Sasportas and, not long thereafter, that of another soldier, Ilan Sa'adon caused a shift in Israeli policy toward Hamas.⁴⁵ This was the first time that 'Hamas was directly identified in an attack on Israeli military targets'.⁴⁶ With it now clearly posing a rising threat, Israel shifted from tolerance of Hamas to active attempts to disrupt it, not only by arresting prominent members, but also by declaring membership in it a punishable offence.⁴⁷

Israel also began to try new methods against Hamas. In response to Hamas's abduction and holding for ransom of an Israeli border policeman, Nissim Toledano, in December 1992, Israel arrested more Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders and deported 415 of them to southern Lebanon.⁴⁸ This particular policy backfired miserably on multiple levels. Firstly, it failed to halt Hamas's terrorist attacks, as shown in figure 4.2 below:

45 Rotem and Sela, "'Shallow Grave Prepared in Advance'. Body of Sasportas Found; Hunt for Sa'adon Continues."

46 Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, Library of Modern Middle East Studies 10 (London ; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), 152.

47 Ibid., 153.

48 Ibid., 157; Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 66.

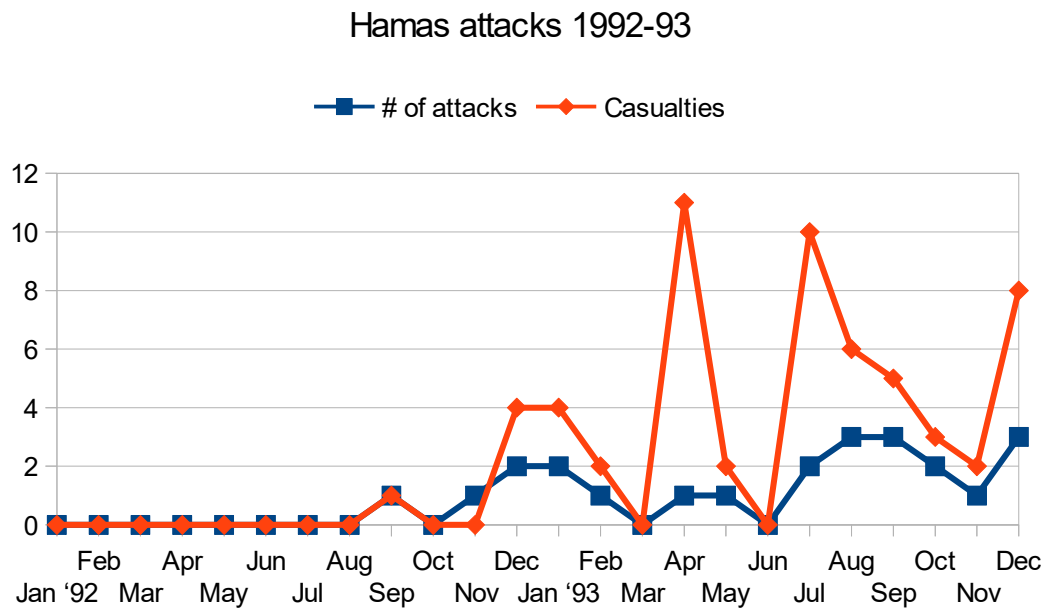


Figure 4.2: Total casualties in Hamas terror attacks, per incident, 1992 through 1993.⁴⁹

There were clearly many more incidents in 1993 (after the deportation) than there had been in 1992. Secondly, the number of deaths and casualties per incident rose in 1993 (see figure 4.3 for mortality figures per attack). The Hamas leaders deported to Lebanon may previously have had a moderating influence on Hamas: ‘While [Sheikh Hassan Yousef] and the others had been in Lebanon, the most radical Hamas members were still free and becoming more furious than ever... these radicalized men filled the temporary leadership roles within Hamas.’⁵⁰ Furthermore, a fact not represented in the chart is that Hamas began using suicide bombing in the months after the deportees returned, claiming its first ‘official’ attack in April 1994.⁵¹

Thirdly, the deportations had a negative impact on Israel on the level of global public opinion. The next day, on 18 December 1992, the UN Security Council

⁴⁹ Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

⁵⁰ Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 52.

⁵¹ Ibid., 54; Hamas did commit two earlier attacks classed by Israeli and Western media as suicide attacks, one in April 1993, the suicide aspect of which may have been accidental, and one a week before the first “official” one in April 1994. See: Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

unanimously adopted Resolution 799, in which it ‘strongly condemn[ed] the action taken by Israel, the occupying power, to deport hundreds of Palestinian civilians’, asserting that this was ‘in contravention of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949’.⁵² The fact that Israel’s staunch ally, the United States, also supported Resolution 799 underscores how widespread the international outcry was. The deportations thus led to an embarrassing international isolation for Israel. At the same time, Hamas was portrayed as a victim of Israeli aggression and its name now appeared frequently in the media. One Hamas leader even appeared on CNN’s ‘Larry King Live’ on Christmas night to remind the world of the Palestinians’ predicament. ‘For the first time, Hamas was able to get its message across to individuals, organizations and governments all over the world.’⁵³ As Arafat later pointed out, Rabin had ‘made 400 deportees into heroes’.⁵⁴

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the deportation to an area outside of Israel’s control allowed members of Hamas’s internal and external leadership to meet each other freely for the first time in years, granting them an opportunity to ‘put the movement’s house in order’. Hamas was also ‘inundated with offers to train its young deportees in a variety of combat techniques including the manufacture of explosives from old mines and from readily available chemicals’.⁵⁵ Some of these offers likely came from Hezbollah, which ‘made a great show of caring for their compatriots during exile’.⁵⁶ ‘The prisoners used their time in exile to forge an unprecedented relationship

52 UN Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 799 (1992) [on Deportation of Palestinian Civilians from Territories Occupied by Israel]*, S/RES/799, 1992, 799, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/799%281992%29; UN Security Council, “Voting Record for S/RES/799 (1992),” *UNBISnet*, December 18, 1992, [http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=voting&index=.VM&term=sres799%20\(1992\)](http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=voting&index=.VM&term=sres799%20(1992)).

53 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 69.

54 Brinn, “Arafat Blames Rabin for Rise of Hamas.”

55 Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 68.

56 Daniel Byman, *A High Price : The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74.

between Hamas and Hezbollah. ... [They] often snuck out of the camp to avoid the media in order to meet with Hezbollah and Muslim Brotherhood leaders, something they could never do inside the Palestinian territories.’⁵⁷ ‘Hizballah may also have familiarized Hamas with suicide bombings and how bombers could use living wills to publicize their martyrdom.’⁵⁸ It is thus almost certainly no coincidence that Hamas’s first suicide attack came just a few months after the deportation.

Israel in 1992 was as yet unable effectively to disrupt Hamas or halt its attacks. On the contrary, its attempts to do so granted Hamas greater publicity, strengthening rather than weakening it, while also allowing it to organize itself better and improve the effectiveness of its attacks. Its new policy toward Hamas was a complete failure and actually contributed greatly to the group’s rising deadliness in the following four years. The start of the Oslo peace process would strengthen the PLO at Hamas’s expense, however, by at least initially increasing support for it and granting it official administrative powers. The PLO used these powers to undermine Hamas and the Mujama in a few ways. One was by setting up a Ministry of Religious Affairs, making sure that ‘religious affairs, including *waqf* (endowments) and courts as well as the salaries of official clergy, were... placed in the new Ministry....’⁵⁹ It also used its newly granted permission openly to operate and enlarge PLO-controlled security forces against Hamas, forces which greatly outnumbered those Hamas could muster.⁶⁰

Mahmoud al-Zahar promised to respond to PLO ‘provocations’ and to ‘defend ourselves against Israel and the PLO’, showing the great extent to which Hamas felt under threat.⁶¹ It began building its own arsenal to counter the PA by smuggling

57 Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 51–52.

58 Byman, *A High Price*, 74.

59 Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 76.

60 Ibid., 74–75.

61 Ibid., 67.

weapons through tunnels into Gaza. It also began to infiltrate the PA's security forces.⁶² The most effective way to undercut the PLO, however, was to stop the peace process with which it was associated and to which Hamas was anyway opposed on ideological grounds, calling it 'an act of betrayal of fundamental Palestinian rights'.⁶³ The growing strength of the PLO and the momentum behind the Oslo process acted as 'push' factors that encouraged Hamas to commit violence. At the same time, the susceptibility of the Oslo Accords to disruption via violence, along with Israel's then open borders with the Palestinian Territories, were 'pull factors', vulnerabilities in Hamas's opponents offering opportunities for attack. On the other hand, the powers that the PLO gained through the Oslo Accords gave it a reason to work towards their success. This increased the mutual interests shared by Israel and the PLO and made possible the use of a tactic against Hamas that Israel had once used against the PLO and against infiltration from Egypt and Jordan: 'indirect deterrence'. The Oslo Accords thus significantly altered the security landscape.

4.2 Israel's response to armed resistance to the Oslo peace process

The first Oslo Accord, signed by Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in September 1993, left security arrangements for late final status negotiations and made no mention whatsoever of terrorism or security cooperation. It gave the Palestinian police force responsibility for the domestic security of Palestinians, 'while Israel will continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats, as well as the responsibility *for overall security of Israelis* for the purpose of safeguarding their

⁶² Ibid., 77.

⁶³ Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch, 2011), 190.

internal security and public order’.⁶⁴ The separate ‘Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area’ set out how the first Israeli withdrawals would be performed.⁶⁵ Annex I also established the ‘Joint Coordination and Cooperation Committee for Mutual Security Purposes’ (JSC) and ‘Joint District Coordination Offices’ (DCOs). Israelis and Palestinians were to patrol roads jointly and inform each other about incidents. In addition, Palestinian security forces were given responsibility for enforcing ‘special security measures aimed at preventing infiltrations across the [Gaza Strip] Delimiting Line or the introduction into the Security Perimeter of any arms, ammunition or related equipment’.⁶⁶

Some security cooperation had thus been established, but there was little in the agreement that gave the PLO real responsibility for halting other groups’ terror attacks and thus as yet no formal mechanism for applying indirect deterrence. The agreement later that year on the ‘Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities between Israel and the PLO’ did nothing to rectify this. It made no mention of terrorism and Article VI Section 5 specified that: ‘Nothing in this Agreement shall affect the continued authority of the military government [of Israel] and its Civil Administration to exercise their powers and responsibilities with regard to security and public order.’⁶⁷

Although this language remained much the same in the 1995 ‘Oslo II’ Agreement, with Israel retaining ‘responsibility for overall security of Israelis and

64 Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, “Israel-Palestine Liberation Organization Agreement : 1993,” The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School, September 13, 1993), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/isrplo.asp (emphasis added).

65 “Agreement on Gaza Strip and Jericho Area” (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 4, 1994), [http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Agreement on Gaza Strip and Jericho Area.aspx](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Agreement%20on%20Gaza%20Strip%20and%20Jericho%20Area.aspx).

66 “Gaza-Jericho Agreement Annex I” (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 4, 1994), <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Gaza-Jericho%20Agreement%20Annex%20I.aspx>.

67 “Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities Between Israel and the PLO” (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School, August 29, 1994), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/transfer_powers.asp.

Settlements', there were important additions.⁶⁸ Most important among these, it specified that the 'Palestinian Police will act systematically against all expressions of violence and terror' and that they would 'arrest and prosecute individuals who are suspected of perpetrating acts of violence and terror'. Furthermore, both sides were to 'cooperate in the exchange of information and coordinate policies and activities. Each side shall immediately and effectively respond to the occurrence or anticipated occurrence of an act of terrorism, violence or incitement and shall take all necessary measures to prevent such occurrence'. This cooperation would occur through the JSC, 'Joint Regional Security Committees' (RSCs), and the DCOs.⁶⁹ 1995 was thus the beginning of Israel's attempt to have the Palestinian Authority assist in providing security for Israel and it came at a time of rising Hamas violence and increasing effectiveness of Hamas attacks (see figures 4.1 above and 4.3 below). Setting out specific responsibilities for the PA with regard to counterterrorism provided criteria for assessing the PA's progress on that front and that could allow Israel to make withdrawals contingent upon improved security, though language on such conditionality was not yet introduced.

In addition to formal security arrangements, Israel and the PLO had reached an unofficial 'understanding' on security cooperation: '[I]n return for intelligence on the Palestinian opposition and particularly the Islamist Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements, the GSS [Israel's General Security Service (Shin Bet)] and the IDF would grant Dahlan and Rajoub [the heads of the Preventive Security Force in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively] a free hand to create a de facto Palestinian police force throughout the West Bank and Gaza.' This was the so-called 'Rome Agreement' and,

68 "Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II)," *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, September 28, 1995, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/interim.html>.

69 "Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Annex I," *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, September 28, 1995, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/iaannex1.html#article1>.

though it was not a formal document, Rabin confirmed that it existed, saying that PA security operated throughout the West Bank ‘in cooperation with Israel’s security forces to safeguard Israel’s security interests’.⁷⁰

Security cooperation was vital because Israel had begun withdrawing from areas of Gaza and the West Bank, depriving it of crucial intelligence. Before that time, Shin Bet agents had considerable local knowledge. ‘[The local Shin Bet captain] was responsible for every person in my neighbourhood. He knew who worked where, who was in school, what they studied, whose wife had just had a baby, and no doubt what the baby weighed. Everything.’⁷¹ In 1995, in contrast to earlier and to conditions in the West Bank, Israel’s head of the military intelligence research division, Brigadier General Yaakov Amidror, said that ‘Israel’s intelligence capacity in Gaza [had] dropped to zero’. The lack of intelligence led Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak to say that Israel had ‘no response for dealing with suicide bombers’.⁷² Yuval Diskin, Head of Shin Bet from 2005 to 2011 and a member of the organization in the 1990s, remembers: ‘We asked how we could prevent terrorism if we no longer control the territories. [...] The Shin Bet needed new tools and they had to be developed.’⁷³ Shmuel Bar mentioned in an interview with the author that he had once told a senior Fatah negotiator that the Palestinians would not have a state until they had an ‘Altalena’ (a ship sunk by the Israel Defence Forces because it was bringing weapons to a Jewish militia group not under the new government’s control). The negotiator said there would ‘never’ be a Palestinian Altalena.⁷⁴

One could argue, however, that Fatah’s crackdown on Hamas in the 1990s was

70 Graham Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine: The Collapse of the Oslo Agreement* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 72–73.

71 Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 78–79.

72 Byman, *A High Price*, 83.

73 Yuval Diskin, interviewed in Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

74 Shmuel Bar, Author interview in person, February 27, 2013.

akin to the Altalena affair. Ami Ayalon, who became Head of Shin Bet after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, insists that the most important factor in improving security was having the PA on board. 'We prevented more attacks each year. We achieved greater security every year. How did it happen? It had a lot to do with changes we made in the Shin Bet, but the truth must be told. The more significant achievement was cooperation between us and the Palestinians.' The top Palestinian security official he worked closely with warned him, however: 'We don't put Hamas members in prison for your sake. We only do it because our people believe that at the end of the day we'll have a state beside Israel. When we no longer believe that, forget about us.'⁷⁵ Just as the Israelis could make implementation of Oslo contingent on security, so the Palestinians could make cooperation on security contingent on the implementation of Oslo. It was a precarious balancing act that would easily be threatened if progress on either front stalled.

Conditions on the ground were thus making disruption more difficult but were now making 'indirect deterrence' more practicable. To make this a true policy of 'indirect deterrence' of Hamas via the PA, however, Israel would have had to make threats of consequences for the PA in the case of poor security. The implementation of the Oslo Accords had not been made contingent upon any particular security goals. Gil Murciano, a senior Israeli analyst, argues that this was by design, as Rabin and Peres feared that conditionality would only play into Hamas's hands: By admitting that it would halt withdrawals if Hamas kept attacking, Israel would in effect hand Hamas an instruction manual on how to achieve its goal of stopping the peace process.⁷⁶ Rabin thus sought to de-link terrorism and the peace process: He vowed to 'fight terrorism as

⁷⁵ Ami Ayalon, interviewed in Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

⁷⁶ Gil Murciano, Author interview via Skype, February 4, 2014.

if there were no peace process, and work for an agreement as if there were no terrorism'.⁷⁷ He continued to target Hamas and other terror groups directly using any leverage Israel had in order to gain intelligence: allowing visits to family abroad, job offers, access to universities in Israel-controlled areas, medical treatment in Israel for a sick child, import permits, government contracts, and cash payments. Palestinians also reported entrapment by Israeli security forces, who used video recordings of adulterous or homosexual affairs to recruit informants. For its part, the PA used its role as a middleman in selecting eligible Palestinians for Israeli approval for permits for travel into Israel to enrich itself and take care of its own members to the exclusion of Hamas.⁷⁸

While fighting terrorism directly wherever possible and working to strengthen cooperation between Israel and the PLO, Rabin did not hold the PLO responsible for terror attacks as long as they did not emanate from its ranks. In October 1993, for example, Rabin responded to anger in Israel that he had not pressed Arafat to condemn recent attacks by saying 'all that we asked from the PLO was a general condemnation of terrorism. Beyond that, the main point is that those Palestinians under Arafat's authority have stopped terrorism.'⁷⁹ He responded to increased attacks using Israeli forces. He noted: 'IDF and other security forces have reinforced their deployment to the highest levels since the outbreak of the intifada six years ago. There are 120 companies now deployed in Judea and Samaria; four times the number on the northern border.'⁸⁰

Rabin also attempted to reduce terror attacks through other, more indirect, means: by closing the crossing points between Israel and the territories—a tool he used

77 Maayana Miskin, "Rabin's Son Slams 'Wicked' Oslo-Terror Link," *Israel National News*, October 15, 2013, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/172868>.

78 Byman, *A High Price*, 83.

79 David Makovsky, "Rabin Slammed for Not Calling on Arafat to Condemn Terrorist Killings," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 1993, sec. News.

80 Amir Rozenblit, "Israel to Free More Prisoners as Rabin Meets Arafat," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1993, sec. News.

with increasing frequency. Prior to the Oslo Accords, Palestinians could move freely between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. Rabin ordered the closure of the crossing point between Israel and the Territories in the spring of 1993 (following a series of bombings) for the first time since 1967.⁸¹ Increasing restrictions were now put in place, and though Palestinians' freedom of movement was greater than it is today, it was increasingly curtailed. In 1994, the border with the Territories was closed for 43 days. By 1996, this number had climbed to more than 100. Standing orders for the border police were made more aggressive as well, according to an interview by the Israeli newspaper Maariv with a border police officer: 'If you see someone holding a cinder block, Molotov cocktail, or an iron bar, you shoot them without making any bones about the matter. There is no longer a procedure for apprehending a subject.'⁸² Closing the border 'looked tough' to Israelis and its economic effects were a 'way of pushing Arafat to act against Hamas'. This was a way to 'indirectly deter' Hamas that did not hold peace talks hostage.⁸³

Though conditionality was not contained in the Oslo agreements, and despite fears of playing into Hamas's hands, Rabin did slowly move towards a certain level of linkage between progress on the implementation of the Oslo Accords and progress in the PA's fight against Palestinian terrorism. An act of Jewish terrorism sparked the round of escalation that would bring Rabin to change approaches. On 25 February 1994, Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler originally from the United States, walked into the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which was filled with 800 Muslim worshippers, at just before 6 AM. Dressed as an Israeli soldier and using an automatic assault rifle used by the

81 Martin Van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey: The Rise of Modern Israel* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2010), 248.

82 Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine*.

83 Byman, *A High Price*, 84.

Israeli military, he massacred 48 Palestinians and wounded a further 150 before either shooting himself or being beaten to death by other Palestinians at the tomb. News of the attack led to demonstrations throughout the Palestinian territories, 'which ultimately led to an increase in the number of Palestinian fatalities'.⁸⁴ Until that time, Hamas had not used suicide attacks.⁸⁵ After Goldstein's attack, Hamas claimed it resorted to suicide bombings in self-defence against an Israeli population intent on harming Palestinians. Goldstein attacked 'the Ibrahim Mosque and then we began to feel we should use suicide bombers.... It's very clear that the idea of a suicide bomber is... a natural response to violence'.⁸⁶ Moreover, Hamas's attacks in 1993 had killed no more than a few people per attack, and that number generally included one or more of the attackers themselves. In 1994, they became more successful, with casualties from all types of attacks increasing from around 50 to well over 200.⁸⁷

Hamas took explicit revenge for Goldtsein's attack. It first waited 40 days after the Hebron massacre (the standard Muslim period of mourning) and then launched its first successful suicide attack using a car bomb at a bus stop in Afula, Israel, killing seven Israelis and the bomber himself while wounding around 50 other people. It committed a second revenge attack a week later, killing a further five Israelis.⁸⁸ In October, Hamas abducted Israeli soldier Nachson Wachsmann, demanding the release of Sheikh Yassin and members of Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and 'seven radical Islamic and

84 Peter Jennings, "Massacre in Arab Mosque by Israeli Gunman," *ABC World News Tonight* (New York: ABC News, February 25, 1994).

85 Hamas had committed only one attack that was allegedly a suicide bombing, but it is not clear that the bomber intended to kill himself because he used a car bomb and the Qassam Brigades, who claimed responsibility for the attack, never called it a suicide bombing. See: Jon Immanuel, Michael Rotem, and David Rudge, "Only Luck Prevents Disaster in Suicide Car-Bomb Attack in Territories," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 18, 1993, sec. News.

86 Abbas Al Sayyad, Interview with Abbas al Sayyad, January 30, 2005, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

87 Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

88 Ibid.

Palestinian organizations'.⁸⁹

This round of violence led Rabin towards the first linkage of security with progress on Oslo: In addition to sealing off the Gaza Strip (though Shin Bet would later find that Wachsman was being held in the West Bank), he suspended talks with the PLO.⁹⁰ Although this halt was temporary, the linkage was not: Rabin began to use such suspensions to punish the PLO. In April 1995, for example, Rabin stated that negotiations with the Palestinians would continue 'only based on the premise that they do their part in observing the agreement we have signed, namely, assuring us that they are operating decisively against armed groups under their jurisdiction, against those who plan and those who carry out terror attacks', while stressing that this was 'a test that cannot be evaluated in one or two days'.⁹¹ Speaking of the closure of the Gaza Strip, he asserted that security would now outweigh all other considerations: 'I recognise that the measures we have taken put a heavy burden on the economy of the people in the Gaza Strip, collectively and individually. But it is up to the Palestinian Authority to carry out its own responsibility... to make sure there will be only one armed law enforcement force in the Gaza Strip'.⁹² This came very close to linking progress on Oslo to progress on security, though he also insisted that 'any attempt to halt the peace process and negotiations will only increase, not weaken the terror'.⁹³ As noted above, the 'Oslo II' agreement signed later that year also added additional language on security cooperation and specified the PA's responsibilities towards fighting terrorism.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Barton Gellman, "Hamas Kidnaps Israeli, Threatens to Kill Him; Rabin Suspends PLO Talks, Seals Gaza Strip," *The Washington Post*, October 12, 1994, Final edition, sec. First; Byman, *A High Price*, 84.

⁹¹ Alon Pinkas, "Rabin: May Take Months for PA to Be Effective against Terror," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 14, 1995, sec. News.

⁹² Derek Brown, "Gaza Blockade to Stay, Says Rabin," *The Guardian*, April 19, 1995, sec. The Guardian Foreign Page.

⁹³ David Makovsky, Liat Collins, and Alon Pinkas, "Rabin: IDF Won't Return to Gaza. 'Palestinian State in Gaza Could Be Acceptable,'" *The Jerusalem Post*, April 13, 1995, sec. News.

The PA did indeed step up security operations. Throughout 1994 and 1995, ‘after each Hamas or Islamic Jihad attack against Israeli targets the government of Yitzhak Rabin demanded that the PNA [Palestinian National Authority] move against the Islamic movement; the PNA would respond, inviting Islamist accusations that the authority was collaborating with Israel’. By November 1995, PA-Hamas relations were worse than ever: ‘In the year since the establishment of the authority the forces of political Islam had been weakened severely.’⁹⁴

Arafat’s approach was not exclusively hard-line. Although he had disliked Hamas from the beginning, describing its members as ‘ants who should cower in their holes lest he and his forces crushed them’, he continually tried to co-opt them. Despite the PA’s increased arrests of Hamas members, Arafat visited Sheikh Yassin’s family in 1995 and promised he would do everything he could to secure the Hamas founder’s release.⁹⁵ With support for Hamas among Palestinians declining to just 11% by October of 1995, Sheikh Yassin feared inter-Palestinian violence and offered Arafat a truce in discussions with the PA. ‘Without an end to violence’, as one PA official noted, ‘any agreement would be meaningless’ because Hamas would still be undermining the PA and Oslo.⁹⁶ The PA thus had nearly as much interest in Israel’s security as Israel itself due to its linkage with the promise of a Palestinian state. In an attempt to convince Hamas to halt violence and join the political process, the PA released Mahmoud Zahar, whom it had held in a Gaza prison for four months.⁹⁷ Arafat also initially offered Hamas 4-5% of seats in the Palestinian National Council (the PLO’s legislative body) and later tried to convince the group’s internal leadership (and through them the more hard-line

94 Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, 176.

95 Jon Immanuel and Itim, “Arafat Visits Sheikh Yassin’s Family,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 3, 1995, sec. News, Nexis UK.

96 Jon Immanuel, “Yassin Fears Intra-Arab Violence,” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 19, 1995, sec. News, Nexis UK.

97 Ibid.

external leadership) to participate in the January 1996 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. To do so, Arafat 'persuaded the Israelis to allow an inside Hamas delegation to leave Palestine to travel to Khartoum... to meet with a group of outside Hamas leaders, and then to hold talks with the Palestinian Authority in Cairo'. In the end, Hamas decided not to participate because the elections 'were a product of the Oslo Agreement which in turn is a Zionist project'.⁹⁸ Hamas stuck to its principles and could not be co-opted, which would soon lead Arafat to adopt a harsher approach.

Shimon Peres, who became Prime Minister after Rabin's assassination, continued to move progress on the Oslo Accords towards greater conditionality on security. On 25 February 1996, responding to devastating Hamas attacks, he ordered the closure of the West Bank and Gaza and a temporary freeze on contacts between Israel and the PA. Raising the stakes for the PA, he also announced that he was 'reconsidering' redeployment from Hebron. Meanwhile, doubts were emerging about Arafat's ability to co-opt Hamas. On 26 February 1996, US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk commented: 'We want more stick and less carrot from Arafat. The process of co-opting [Hamas] has failed.'⁹⁹ Until that point, Arafat's 'carrot and stick' policy had shown some success: 'From April 1995 on... Arafat has applied force against Hamas. In Gaza, PA police have arrested literally hundreds of Palestinians after every suicide operation in Israel. But Arafat has also dangled the carrot,' generally leaving Hamas's civic and religious institutions alone. Despite such 'softness,' Arafat had long used the stick as well, to significant effect: 'soon all of the top leaders of Hamas, along with thousands of its members, were locked away in Palestinian prisons. Many were tortured for information. Some died.'¹⁰⁰ During that time, popular support for Hamas fell and it

⁹⁸ Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 189–193.

⁹⁹ Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine*, 83–84.

¹⁰⁰Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 62.

agreed to a cease-fire during the last quarter of 1995, 'during which time only one Israeli was killed'.¹⁰¹ Arafat was not alone in combining punishment with incentives. Peres considered releasing Sheikh Yassin from prison once the PLO had changed its charter and even some within Israel's security establishment recommended this be done. The thinking was that acceding to Arafat's requests to release Yassin would reward the former for his counterterrorism efforts. 'In addition, there [were] constant concerns about Yassin's health, and there [was] fear that if his health deteriorate[d], there would be an outbreak of terrorism.'¹⁰²

In addition to the difficulty of adding conditionality to progress on peace talks due to fears this would give Hamas a clear path to derailing them, Hamas was difficult to 'deter' indirectly via the PA alone because the political leadership of the former acted freely in Jordan. Arafat claimed he was doing all he could to control Hamas but that he was 'being undermined by the continued hospitality given by Jordan to Hamas's senior leadership.'¹⁰³ '[B]y the summer of 1994, [Israel, the United States, and] the Palestinian Authority missed no opportunity to interpret any activity on the part of Hamas in Jordan... as an act of hostility against Israel that would undermine international efforts to make peace'.¹⁰⁴ Jordan had signed a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994 and it began to respond to these pressures. In May 1995, after Hamas leaders in Jordan refused a request from Arafat to halt violence, Jordan's Interior Minister Salamah Hamad informed the non-Jordanian members of Hamas's leadership that they had to leave Jordan within the month.¹⁰⁵ During the months that followed, Jordanian authorities continued to 'harass' the remaining members of Hamas in Jordan, though they were not

101Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine*, 84.

102David Makovsky, "Darawshe: Peres Promised to Release Yassin After Change in PLO Charter," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 8, 1996, sec. News, Nexis UK.

103Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 82.

104Ibid., 80.

105Ibid., 82.

yet asked to leave and Hamas was not banned from operating.¹⁰⁶ As attempts to co-opt Hamas continually failed, and violence continued to rise in 1996, both Israel and the PA began to focus more heavily on the threat and use of force against Hamas. Greater focus would also be placed on Hamas's activities in Jordan.

4.3 1996 and thereafter: More stick and less carrot

Three events occurred in the first months of 1996 that convinced Arafat to target Hamas more aggressively. Arafat's attempts to co-opt Hamas by convincing it to participate in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections of 20 January 1996 failed, showing that it was not willing to participate on Arafat's terms and publicly underscoring its opposition not only to Israel, but to Arafat and PLO as well. Hamas also increased its suicide attacks after Israel's targeted killing of Yahya Ayyash ('the Engineer'), Hamas's main bomb maker, on 5 January 1996. Finally, the anti-terrorism consensus that emerged from the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit brought the US, Israel, Russia, and Arab leaders behind the PA, encouraging it to shift away from attempts to co-opt Hamas and towards applying more pressure.¹⁰⁷ Observers from Hamas 'could not help but conclude that the summit was nothing but a declaration of war on Hamas'.

The attitude towards Hamas in Jordan also began to shift as a result. Like the infiltrations of the first decade of Israel's existence covered in the last chapter, Hamas could only be countered with effective Jordanian action. 100 Hamas men there were arrested and interrogated in 1996 and 1997 and Hamas was prohibited from speaking to

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁷William Clinton and Hosnie Mubarak, "Summit of Peacemakers-Sharm El-Sheikh--Final Statement," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, March 13, 1996, [http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Summit of Peacemakers - Sharm el-Sheikh-March 13-.aspx](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Summit%20of%20Peacemakers%20-%20Sharm%20el-Sheikh-March%2013-.aspx); "Peacemakers Unite to Defeat Terrorism," *CNN*, March 13, 1996, http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9603/summit_sharm/13/index.html.

the media. In May 1996, Hamas's Gaza spokesman, Mahmoud Al-Zahar, stated that 'martyrdom operations' (suicide bombings) had been a mistake. Hamas's official spokesman, Ibrahim Gosheh, broke Jordan's media ban to announce that Al-Zahar's statement had been made under duress. Jordanian intelligence issued him with a stern warning as a result. When he spoke to the media again in September of 1997, he was arrested.¹⁰⁸

Tamimi also alleges that Jordanian intelligence acted against Hamas by driving a wedge between it and the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood by taking advantage of internal divisions within the latter group.¹⁰⁹ Even if this was not the case, tensions were increasing between Hamas and its Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood hosts. Former members of Hamas in Jordan began claiming that it had plans to 'infiltrate' the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and that it was Hamas, not Jordanian intelligence, as the Brotherhood had assumed, that had circulated documents attacking the Brotherhood's leadership.¹¹⁰ This 'accelerated the deterioration of the relationship between Hamas and the' Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.¹¹¹ Tamimi concludes that '1996 had been Hamas's toughest year by far since its creation. In both Jordan and Palestine, the movement had taken severe punishment'.¹¹² As a result of this pressure, and despite an initial spike in violence, it began negotiating with the PA on a ceasefire, which resulted in a halt to Hamas's attacks that lasted from March 1996 until March 1997, when Netanyahu announced renewed settlement construction in East Jerusalem.¹¹³

In Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, meanwhile, cooperation between Israel and

¹⁰⁸Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 89.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 94–96.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 98.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 102.

¹¹³"'Hamas Political Wing Wants End to Violence,'" *The Jerusalem Post*, March 10, 1996, sec. News, Nexis UK; Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

the PA ‘surged in part because Arafat recognized that Shimon Peres... was weak electorally and that Hamas was gaining in strength. ...Palestinian security chiefs knew that without security, peace talks would go nowhere’.¹¹⁴ Many in Israel alleged that PA prisons resembled ‘revolving doors’, however. The PA would arrest Hamas militants, only to release them or facilitate their escapes later.¹¹⁵ Even when they did not release the prisoners, the conditions in which some were held would hardly have precluded them from coordinating further attacks: ‘In one instance the PA arrested Awad Silmi, a wanted terrorist [but] did not arrest the three other Hamas members with him because Israel did not specifically demand it. ...Senior IDF officials claim Silmi’s detention was comfortable: He kept his pistol, he stayed in a private home, and he left the house during the day as he pleased.’¹¹⁶

Others assert that PA actions against Hamas were increasingly severe and had definite effects. Shlomo Brom is a retired Brigadier General and former director of the IDF’s Strategic Planning Division in the Planning Branch of the General Staff. He participated in peace negotiations with the PLO and became Deputy National Security Advisor in 2000. He insists that the idea that PA prisons were a ‘revolving door’ is ‘simply wrong’. The PA ‘insulted’ Hamas by arresting prominent leaders and shaving their beards.¹¹⁷ It also began blocking Hamas’s humanitarian institutions that year. This was a dramatic step, illustrated by Hamas founder Sheikh Yassin’s denunciation that even ‘Israel never dared to close these associations when I headed them or even afterwards’.¹¹⁸ The PA had ‘quite a sophisticated policy of dealing with Hamas’, but Brom notes that this was not just repression by force, as many Israelis might have liked

¹¹⁴Byman, *A High Price*, 105.

¹¹⁵“Gov’t Officials Step Up Criticism of PA ahead of the Talks in Washington,” *Mideast Mirror*, November 3, 1997; Jim Lehrer, “Fragile Peace,” *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* (PBS, March 24, 1997).

¹¹⁶Byman, *A High Price*, 106.

¹¹⁷Shlomo Brom, Author interview via telephone, February 26, 2014.

to have seen. He suggests that this was responsible for the impression in Israel that the PA was soft on Hamas. He confirms that Arafat also used incentives for Hamas to encourage it to 'behave'.¹¹⁹

An expert with a background in military intelligence who had extensive contact with Hamas prisoners confirms that the PA was not 'soft' on them, though the expert asserts Arafat did not toughen up until the summer of 1997. During that time, prisoners told the expert that 'the pressure on them [from Arafat] was very high'. In accounting for the fall in Israeli deaths from 1997, the expert contends that 'Israeli countermeasures were the most important, but cooperation with Arafat was also important when it worked'.¹²⁰ Several other sources concur with this idea, though they show that the PA's crackdown on Hamas began much earlier. In addition to Tamimi's above assertion that 1996 was extremely difficult for Hamas, Hamas experts Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell note that 'thousands of Palestinian security forces were deployed in the move against Hamas' in response to the wave of Hamas violence unleashed after Israel's killing of Ayyash. 'Over 2,000 leaders, members, activists, and supporters were arrested and thrown into Palestinian jails and so-called detention centres. Hundreds of [Hamas-controlled] mosques... were placed under the direct authority of the PA. Many institutions in Hamas's network of social, welfare, political, educational, research, and medical institutions were raided and closed down.'¹²¹

For Hamas, the worst part of this crackdown was not that so many of their members and supporters were thrown in jail, it was what happened while they were in

118"‘Sheikh Yassin Denounces Closing of HAMAS Institutions,’ *Agence France Presse -- English*, October 2, 1997, sec. International News, Nexis UK; see also: Oshrat Kottler, Aharon Barnea, and Sulayman Al-Shafi, "‘Shaykh Yasin Says PNA ‘Harassing’ Hamas," *Meet the Press* (Jerusalem: Channel 2 TV, January 24, 1998), BBC Summary of World Broadcasts.

119Brom, interview.

120Expert with a background in military intelligence, Author interview via Skype, March 25, 2014.

121Milton-Edwards, *Hamas*, 219.

detention. Abdel Aziz Rantissi later recounted: ‘You know they shaved the beards off our imams and sodomized them with bottles... We will never forget the men of Fatah who did this to us.’¹²² Khaled Meshaal laments, ‘the harshness of the Palestinian Authority’s security services during the nineties... starting with Hamas and the torture and degradation of its leaders—opened up psychological wounds that are still unhealed’.¹²³ Amnesty International’s reports on PA prisons confirm this. In a December 1996 report covering 1995 and most of 1996, Amnesty declared that ‘more than 2,000 political detainees [had been] arrested and detained over the past two years by the Palestinian Authority... Most of the political arrests carried out have been made without any arrest warrant and those detained have not been brought before a judge or a public prosecutor. Arrests frequently involve large numbers of armed security personnel and unwarranted violence. Frequently, members of the family are taken as hostages, to put pressure on a family member to give himself up to the police.’¹²⁴ It also reports that, while torture in prisons during the first year of the PA’s operation was generally reserved for those ‘accused of cooperating with the Israeli security services or detainees accused of... [involvement] in drug-dealing or prostitution’, this had changed by mid-1995, when ‘reports of beatings and ill-treatment of political and common law detainees in Gaza were growing more frequent.’ It goes on to note that ‘[t]orture appears now to be most widespread in Gaza’, Hamas’s stronghold.¹²⁵ Azzam Tamimi describes how the PA detained ‘more than 1000 Hamas members and supporters’ as part of a campaign to respond to Hamas’s increased violence after the killing of Ayyash. He notes that this

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Khaled Meshaal, *The Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS* (London: MEMO Publishers, 2013), 70.

¹²⁴“Palestinian Authority: Prolonged Political Detention, Torture and Unfair Trials: A Synopsis” (London: Amnesty International, December 2, 1996), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/070/1996/en/9c02854c-ead4-11dd-b6f5-3be39665bc30/mde150701996en.html>.

¹²⁵Ibid.

campaign was strengthened by the March 1996 Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

A 1999 report by Amnesty International, which summarized the PA's detention of 'political prisoners' (those 'held for suspected membership of Islamist or leftist groups opposed to the peace process with Israel'), declared that, at that time, there were 'about 120 "political prisoners" who have been held by the Palestinian Authority without charge or trial for more than one year, in addition to about 100 held for less than a year'.¹²⁶ It suggests pressure from Israel, the United States, and others supporting the peace process was largely the reason. This took the form of 'pressure from outside the Palestinian Authority to put down "terrorists"'. It also suggests that the 'revolving door' phenomenon was an outdated and exaggerated notion. It asserts that the creation of the State Security Court in February 1995 meant that, 'from April 1995, a number of those thought to have organized suicide bombs, recruited bombers, or members of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, were tried in grossly unfair trials—secret and summary, often in the middle of the night, with military judges, prosecutors and defence—and given heavy prison sentences of up to 25 years'. Public outcry over this nevertheless meant that, from June 1995, such trials were more often used 'against those whose extradition may be sought by Israel if they are not swiftly sentenced'.¹²⁷ This suggests that those Israel most wanted to see detained for long periods, those for which it would seek extradition for trial in Israel, were tried and sentenced to long incarcerations by the PA. Finally, a PA official hinted in 1997 that those held without trial and later released were not involved in attacks on Israelis: 'Those concerned with justice knew "that 80% of those we arrested had committed no offence either under

126"Palestinian Authority--Defying the Rule of Law: Political Detainees Held Without Charge or Trial," Report (London: Amnesty International, April 20, 1999), 4, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE21/003/1999/en/d0a4ec8c-e285-11dd-abce-695d390ccea/mde210031999en.pdf>.

127Ibid., 5.

Palestinian or under Israeli law”; they were just being arrested because of pressure from Israel, either because they were suspected of being Islamist activists or to “make up the numbers” and show that the Palestinian Authority was making a serious effort to act against “terrorism”.’ When the PA released just 40 prisoners who had never been charged with any offence in 1999, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decried this as ‘a resumption of the revolving door.’¹²⁸ All of this shows that the PA’s activities against Hamas were increasingly severe from 1995-1996 due to pressure from Israel, the US, and even Arab countries to act decisively against terrorism. The PA saw stopping Hamas violence as commensurate with its interests because Hamas was an obstacle to the peace process upon which the PA had staked its legitimacy.

4.4 Acceptance, deterrence, and disruption of Hamas in its early years:

It is striking that 1996, along with allegedly being Hamas’s most difficult year since its inception, also marked a peak in its violence and effectiveness (see figures 4.1 above and 4.3 below).¹²⁹

¹²⁸Ibid., 6.

¹²⁹Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 102.

Effectiveness of Hamas attacks prior to Al-Aqsa Intifada

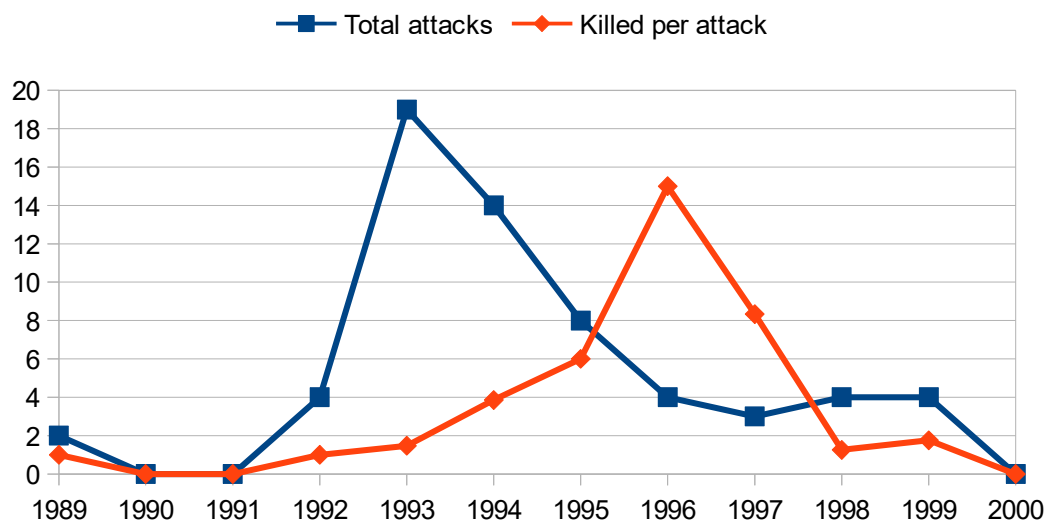


Figure 4.3: Effectiveness of Hamas attacks prior to the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which began on 28 September 2000.¹³⁰

This begs the question: Was Hamas opportunistically violent in 1996 (i.e. controls on it became so lax it could easily circumvent them) or was it violent out of desperation?

How can the steady decline in violence from 1997 to the first part of 2000 be explained?

There are three possibilities, which will be covered in turn. The first is that Israel began to disrupt Hamas effectively by jailing its members, halting funding flows, and confiscating weapons, for example. The second possibility is that Hamas, seeing its *raison d'être* endangered by the peace process and its organization itself endangered by the rising support and power of the PA, used suicide attacks to derail the peace process and undermine the PA's legitimacy and therefore support. After seeing that this was succeeding, it reduced its attacks. This would mean 'push' factors (attacks out of desperation) were the primary driver. The third possibility is that, by making progress on the peace process increasingly contingent upon improved security, and as Arafat saw

¹³⁰Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks" Note: Suicide attack data include the bomber among the dead.

that Hamas violence was threatening to derail the peace process that would make him head of a new Palestinian state, the PA was forced to control Hamas, which it did effectively ('indirect deterrence').

The first possibility is almost certainly incorrect. There is no evidence that Israel began to gain significant control over Hamas. Gil Murciano confirms this: 'There was no fundamental change in [anti-terror] infrastructure in the 1990s.'¹³¹ There is also overwhelming evidence that Israel did not severely reduce Hamas's capabilities. The most striking proof is provided by a look at the Second Intifada, during which Hamas was able to re-launch its suicide bombing campaign at an even more deadly level than before (see chapter 4). As Israel obviously did not simply allow Hamas to restart attacks at that time, it is clear this was to do with the PA's release of Hamas prisoners in late 2000. Israel clearly had not single-handedly defeated Hamas in the late 1990s.

The second possibility is that the initial peak in Hamas violence was due to desperation and that the subsequent fall in violence was due to Hamas seeing the threat recede. Viewed in this way, increasing security cooperation between Israel and the PA and other attempts to 'deter' Hamas 'indirectly' made things difficult for Hamas and caused it to increase its violence. The introduction of conditionality into the peace process was supposed to improve security by forcing the PA into greater action. Paradoxically, however, it accomplished that improvement by giving Hamas an easy way to foil the peace process, while the introduction of conditionality itself provided evidence that Hamas was succeeding in damaging the peace process and sowing division between Israel and the PA. One jailed Hamas member, Abu Warda, claims this was part of Hamas's calculus: 'Speaking of the military wing of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas, Mr. Abu Warda said its leaders had stepped up their military actions

¹³¹Murciano, interview.

[in early 1996] in part because the Israeli elections, originally scheduled for next fall, had been moved forward to May. “They thought that the military operations would work to the benefit of the Likud and against the left,” he said. “They wanted to destroy the political process, and they thought that if the right succeeded, the political process would stop.””¹³²

Benjamin Netanyahu came to office emphasizing security, not denouncing the peace process per se. He signed the Hebron Accord and later the Wye River Memorandum, which, unbeknownst to him at the time, was the product of ongoing peace negotiations between members of Israel’s opposition and negotiators close to Arafat.¹³³ The peace process, therefore, was not yet hopeless and Hamas could not yet assume it could halt its attacks because its goals had been achieved. When Netanyahu agreed to the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron in January 1997, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, along with other commentators who supported the peace process, were optimistic. Columnist Tom Friedman commented that there was now ‘a solid tent of Oslo’ because the Hebron Protocol had brought in ‘half of the other half’ (i.e. half of the half of the population that did not vote for Labour and was thus sceptical of Oslo) on board.¹³⁴ Shimon Peres echoed this view: ‘I think Netanyahu and his party realized that the Oslo agreement is the only game in town. ...The camp that has insisted on the superiority of the territorial request... gave up its ideological position.’ Asked what the alternative to Oslo was, Peres replied: ‘Renewing the confrontation with all its consequences, which may have led again to terror, boycott, to a hostile world, to a

¹³²Serge Schmemmann, “Target Was Israeli Government, Says Arab Linked to 3 Bombings,” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1996, Academic OneFile, http://libraries.state.ma.us/login?gwurl=http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA150534733&v=2.1&u=mlln_b_bpublic&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=ddffce91c4b0f7b9400ad42c322feace.

¹³³Ahron Bregman, *Elusive Peace: How the Holy Land Defeated America* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2005), xxvi–xxvii.

¹³⁴Charlie Rose, “A Conversation about the Hebron Accord,” *Charlie Rose* (PBS, January 15, 1997).

reserved United States, everything. The United States does not forget it was a witness to the agreement and being a witness includes a commitment to see it realized.’¹³⁵ Senior Israeli analyst Gil Murciano agrees with this assessment, saying that Netanyahu was ‘locked into’ the peace process.¹³⁶ The language used here is telling, however, as it reveals Netanyahu was forced to go along with Oslo rather than being committed to it out of personal conviction. When Peres was asked if Netanyahu was now where he and Rabin were with the Oslo Accord, he responded ‘I wish that this would be the overall conclusion. I’m not so sure,’ suggesting that it was still unclear, even then and even to the person perhaps most committed to the peace process, whether Netanyahu would continue with redeployments or back out. Former Shin Bet Head Yaakov Peri believes the peace process was already all but doomed during Netanyahu’s reign: ‘Just as there was a strong desire, a firm decision, and a real intent by Peres and Rabin to reach an agreement, after Rabin was gone, the desire, or Israel’s intent to reach a real agreement dwindled, to put it mildly.’¹³⁷ Ami Ayalon insists ‘there was no good faith. There was no good faith from the Palestinian side and not from the Israeli side. We wanted security and got more terrorism. They wanted a state and got more settlements’.¹³⁸

The text of the later Wye Memorandum left Netanyahu room for manoeuvre with regard to redeployments. The time line that was part of the agreement set out the order in which both sides were to accomplish agreed tasks. The clustering of these tasks into stages (one through four) also allowed the interpretation that work on the next stage could be halted if progress on the current stage was insufficient.¹³⁹ In the end, Israel only implemented the first stage of the agreement (a transfer of 2% of Israel-controlled Area

135Charlie Rose, “A Conversation about the Peace Process,” *Charlie Rose* (PBS, January 15, 1997).

136Murciano, interview.

137Yaakov Peri, interviewed in Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

138Ami Ayalon, interviewed in *ibid*.

139*The Wye River Memorandum*, 1998, http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/wye_eng.htm.

C to jointly controlled Area B and a transfer of 7.1% of land from Area B to PA-controlled Area A). Less than two months after the signing of the agreement, Israel set out conditions for the implementation of stages two and three. These included Arafat refraining from a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, improvements in security, and collection of illegal arms.¹⁴⁰

Trust in the peace process was also already fading. 'In personal interviews many Palestinians date their lack of faith in the peace process to the assassination [of Rabin] and the Netanyahu victory.'¹⁴¹ Netanyahu viewed redeployments and further agreements with the PLO as 'concessions'. When riots broke out after Netanyahu approved excavation in the Hasmonean Tunnel under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, 'some observers believe Netanyahu, facing heavy U.S. pressure, felt compelled to make concessions.'¹⁴² Tom Friedman was one of those observers. He believed the Hebron Accord came about as a result of the Hasmonean Tunnel uprisings.¹⁴³ Director of Military Intelligence General Amos Malka remarked that the 'tunnel incidents [were] an initiated move of violence that was aimed, from Arafat's perspective, at instilling a sense of urgency.'¹⁴⁴

Arafat's tactic undermined Israelis' trust in him, however, which helped to undermine the peace process itself. After the tunnel riots, Israelis 'determined that they would never again allow Palestinians to be rewarded politically for fomenting violence'.¹⁴⁵ In a bid to please his ring-wing base, Netanyahu approved the building of

140Israeli Government Press Office, "Israel Sets Conditions for Wye Implementation," *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, December 12, 1998, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Peace/wyecon.html>.

141Byman, *A High Price*, 87.

142Ibid., 88.

143Rose, "A Conversation about the Hebron Accord."

144Akiva Eldar, "Popular Misconceptions," *Ha'aretz*, June 11, 2004, FOFOGNET Archives -- June 2004, week 2 (#6), <http://list2.mcgill.ca/scripts/wa.exe?A2=ind0406b&L=fofognet&P=744>.

145Byman, *A High Price*, 90.

the Har Homa settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. This in turn led to disillusion among Palestinians. As a result of the Har Homa settlement construction, 'the PLO suspended all negotiations with the Netanyahu government, including all cooperation between Israeli military and Palestinian Authority security forces. ...Opinion polls registered a decline in Palestinian support for the Oslo process, the PA and the leadership of Yassir Arafat, and a rise in support for Hamas, including its advocacy of armed attacks on Israeli targets. Professional and student elections saw Islamist-led lists achieve victories in Gaza, Nablus, Hebron and East Jerusalem.'¹⁴⁶ Hamas also perpetrated its first suicide bombing in nearly a year, stating that it was in retaliation for the planned settlement construction.¹⁴⁷ Hamas was gaining at the PLO's expense and the peace process, which Hamas so vehemently opposed, looked more vulnerable than ever.

Netanyahu's attempt to come down hard on Hamas also backfired that same year. On 25 September, 1997, two Mossad agents attempted to poison the head of Hamas's external political leadership, Khaled Meshal. The agents were apprehended, however, and Jordan's King Hussein was furious that Israel had carried out such an operation on Jordanian soil. Eventually, US President Clinton intervened and pressured Israel to give Meshal the antidote. Netanyahu also, on King Hussein's demand, released Hamas's founder, Sheikh Yassin, from prison. The episode 'placed Hamas once more in the spotlight, as well as dampening down for a while the tension... between Hamas and the Jordanian regime.' It also improved relations between Hamas and the PA. Beyond that, Sheikh Yassin was able to begin a tour of the Middle East, where he was welcomed in Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Kuwait, Syria, and Sudan (although Arafat apparently prevented him from being received in South Africa, Iraq, Jordan, and

¹⁴⁶Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine*, 136.

¹⁴⁷"URGENT Caller Says HAMAS Carried Out Tel Aviv Bombing: Israeli TV," *Agence France Presse*, March 21, 1997, sec. International News, Nexis UK; Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

Lebanon).¹⁴⁸ Yassin denied that he asked for money during these visits, but it did not matter: Money flooded in from the Saud family, 'the Sheiks of Qatar and Kuwait, the rulers of the United Arab Emirates and the leaders of Iran'.¹⁴⁹ Instead of weakening Hamas by decapitating its leadership, Netanyahu had succeeded in granting it great publicity and strengthening the groups' finances and support, all while undermining Jordanian trust in him and belief among Palestinians and Israelis in the prospects for the peace process.

The argument of the second scenario thus runs that Hamas, now strengthened, saw less need to launch bombing attacks in the next year, and the number of deaths duly declined in 1998 (see figures 4.1 and 4.3). Sagit Yehoshua, a criminologist who conducted extensive interviews with Hamas members in Israeli prisons in 2004-5, notes that Hamas is sensitive to public opinion. She thinks low support for attacks coupled with a receding threat from the Oslo process after Likud came to power was the most likely reason for reducing attacks towards the end of the 1990s.¹⁵⁰ She contends that Hamas's attacks up until 1997, even though the public did not support them, were meant to show that Hamas was there and to offer an alternative to Fatah. Having achieved this, they heeded public opinion and reduced attacks until the public was on their side again during the Second Intifada.¹⁵¹ The political situation was generally evolving in its direction, so it could afford to wait.

The second possibility is thus attractive, but there are a few problems. One problem is that public support for Hamas was falling along with support for violence against Israel. Whereas an average of 23% of the Palestinian public supported it in 1994,

¹⁴⁸Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 111–115.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵⁰Sagit Yehoshua, Author interview in person, February 19, 2014.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

this support had fallen to just 15% by early 1998.¹⁵² What is more, the peace process appeared to be restarting in 1999 and 2000, years that coincided with falling Hamas violence. A final problem is the reason for the fall in violence: A look at figures 4.1 and 4.3 reveals that deaths and casualties in Hamas attacks fell between 1997 and 1999, but that the number of Hamas attacks did not. Hamas committed only two (catastrophic) attacks in 1997, increasing that number to four in each of the two following years. A variation of two attacks per year may be little more than statistical noise, but it does suggest the fall in violence was not due to a Hamas decision to halt attacks. Instead, its attacks were simply becoming less effective, a conclusion that supports the idea that the PA's arrests and repression of Hamas were making it difficult for the organization to operate effectively. Further evidence of this is provided by events surrounding targeted killing. When Israel killed Ayyash in 1996, Hamas increased its attacks dramatically (before halting them for a year thereafter). When Israel killed two Hamas military commanders in 1998, Hamas accused the PA of colluding with Israel in their killing, but it did not succeed in causing anything like the devastation it had caused two years earlier: 1998 saw many fewer Hamas terror casualties than 1996 or 1997.

The third possibility is thus the most plausible, as it is clear that the PA did indeed arrest Hamas members during the mid- to late 1990s and that this, combined with pressure placed on Jordan to stop showing Hamas's leadership there such 'hospitality', were enough to make things very difficult for Hamas by 1996.¹⁵³ How can the fact that these difficulties initially coincided with an *increase* in Hamas violence, rather than the opposite, be explained?

As mentioned above, Jordan dealt more harshly with Hamas in Amman, but it

¹⁵²Khalil Shikaki, "Peace Now or Hamas Later," *Foreign Affairs*, The Politics of Paralysis, 77, no. 4 (August 1998): 33.

¹⁵³Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 82; Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, 176.

did not deport its leadership or ban the organization altogether until 1999—after Hamas’s level of violence was already in decline.¹⁵⁴ Brom explains that the PA had been taking a tougher line since 1996, before Netanyahu’s arrival in power. It took time for this to cause a fall in violence, however, because counterinsurgency generates an ‘accumulated effect’ rather than immediate results. Once the PA changed policies in 1996 and Israel’s security continued operations, there were accumulated achievements that took time to become visible. ‘As you arrest, there are, of course, people also joining, but if the rate of draining water from the pool is faster than the rate at which it is going in, you have an accumulated effect.’ In essence, changes in Hamas violence had little to do with changes in Israel’s government or its policies throughout the 1990s except for the incentive to be violent provided by the peace process and the related incentive this gave the PA to take action against Hamas.¹⁵⁵ Eventually, the latter incentive had the more powerful effect.

Shlomi Eldar, an Israeli journalist who has covered Gaza for the past two decades, agrees with this assessment. He notes that all of Hamas’s internal political and military leaders were in PA prisons at some point. He himself visited one in 1997 that housed numerous Hamas prisoners. He says they were afraid of the PA and of Dahlan’s ‘gang’ (the PA official responsible for security in the Gaza Strip) in particular. When asked why Hamas violence decreased between 1996 and 2000, he argues it was these efforts with the PA plus the effects of public opinion, which opposed suicide attacks on Israel as long as there was a prospect of peace. After Israel killed Ayyash, Hamas went

¹⁵⁴Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 134; Although Meshaal was uncomfortable enough in Jordan to announce the moving of Hamas’s office to Syria already in June 1998: “Jordan has become a theater for the Israeli Mossad activities, and after (National Infrastructure Ministry) Arik Sharon’s declarations that Khaled Mashaal is still a goal for assassination, Hamas believes that Syria is safer than Jordan.”; This suggests Israel’s attempted assassination of Meshaal may have been more successful, in one way, than thought. See: Margot Dudkevitch and Mohammed Najib, “Mashaal to Move Office to Syria,” *The Jerusalem Post*, June 10, 1998, sec. News, Nexis UK.

¹⁵⁵Brom, interview.

‘crazy’. Eldar interviewed a Hamas member who said they had no choice but to retaliate because they feared they might all end up in PA prisons. By 1999, they had concluded that they could not fight the PA or Oslo. When Eldar was in Gaza in 1999, he remarks ‘Hamas was nowhere to be seen. They had gone underground.’ Many were in PA prisons, others had fled to Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. During this time, Hamas returned focus to its social institutions, as the economic situation in Gaza was dire from the border closures.¹⁵⁶ As Mosab Hassan Yousef, no fan of the PLO, admits,

Hamas—once the ascendant power among Palestinians—was in shambles. The shattered organization’s bitter rival for hearts and minds was now in complete control.

Through intrigue and deal making, the Palestinian Authority had accomplished what Israel had been unable to do through sheer might. It had destroyed the military wing of Hamas and thrown its leadership and fighters into prison. Even after they were released, the Hamas members went home and did nothing more against the PA or the occupation. The young feda’iyeen were exhausted. Their leaders were divided and deeply suspicious of one another.¹⁵⁷

As a final piece of evidence for how forcefully the PA moved against Hamas, Eldar notes Hamas’s continued hatred of Dahlan and Hamas forces’ symbolic attack on Dahlan’s ‘preventive security’ offices during their 2007 takeover of Gaza. ‘They felt the hand of Dahlan and that’s why they hate him so much.’ He also remarks on the fact that Hamas was unsuccessful in its return to violence during the Second Intifada until important Hamas prisoners were released from PA prisons in the first months of the uprising.¹⁵⁸

The historian Ahron Bregman agrees, asserting that Hamas had begun to see the peace process as inevitable by the late 1990s. He notes that by then, Hamas did not (or was unable to) increase violence in response to renewed peace negotiations: Ehud

¹⁵⁶Shlomi Eldar, Author interview via Skype, February 26, 2014.

¹⁵⁷Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 125.

¹⁵⁸Eldar, interview; Hamas attempted two attacks in late 2000, but they failed to kill anyone but the bomber: Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

Barak's election as Israel's Prime Minister sparked renewed optimism about the peace process, yet Hamas violence did not increase in 1999. 'When there is a peace process, there's an effort by Arafat or Abu Mazen to keep Hamas down, but if it looks like it's getting close, Hamas may increase attacks.'¹⁵⁹ This all indicates that Hamas was indeed heavily weakened by 1999 and mostly by the PA—a success for 'indirect deterrence'.

This suggests that Hamas's increased violence in the first half of the 1990s is explained by the rise of the peace process and the PLO (a 'push factor' encouraging Hamas to attack) and the opportunity provided by Israel's inability and the PA's unwillingness to act against Hamas (a 'pull factor' encouraging Hamas to attack). Conversely, the fall in violence from 1997 to 2000 is best explained by stark measures pursued by the PA (a reduction in opportunity and therefore in the 'pull factor'). As suggested by Bregman, Eldar, and Brom in interviews, Hamas may have decided to change tactics in 2000 as a result of this repression. As Eldar notes, Hamas is sensitive to public opinion. 'If the public doesn't support their activities, they wait or do something different.'¹⁶⁰

The third scenario was thus the most important (the PA was preventing Hamas from violence), but the 'push' factors from the second may also have had an impact. Hamas was no longer a nearly unknown political opposition group. It now enjoyed increased publicity and public approval. It had succeeded in announcing its presence and registering its opposition to the PLO and Oslo. Having established itself, the 'push' factors of feared irrelevance or extinction were now less powerful. At the same time, increased PA repression made attacks more difficult and increasingly counter-productive, encouraging Hamas to change tactics and focus on its humanitarian

¹⁵⁹Ahron Bregman, Author interview in person, February 26, 2014.

¹⁶⁰Eldar, interview.

institutions. 'Indirect deterrence' was thus working, but it relied on a precarious alignment of interests between Israel and the PA and perhaps even on the relative strength of Hamas as an opposition force. Tactical deterrence of Hamas was thus working well by 1999 and 2000, but a strategic end to the conflict was still needed. As the model in the introduction suggests (figure 1.4), the 'pull' factors involved in indirect deterrence are controlled by the proxy (here, the PA) and are reliant on that proxy viewing the status quo (of the peace process and progress towards a Palestinian state) positively. If the PA no longer accepted the status quo, for example because it no longer believed Israel would give it a state, its control of Hamas could instantly be withdrawn. The failure of Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat to agree on a peace deal in 2000 meant, in the words of former Shin Bet head Ami Ayalon, 'it was obvious we were heading toward another Intifada, another round of violence by a group, a society, a nation that felt it had nothing to lose'.¹⁶¹ The advent of the Second Intifada would then throw the interests of Israel and the PA still further out of alignment and make continued 'indirect deterrence' all but impossible. The next chapter is devoted to the collapse of the indirect deterrence relationship and illustrates Israel's shift to more direct deterrence of Hamas as well as towards greater reliance on defence and deterrence-by-denial via the West Bank security barrier.

¹⁶¹Former Shin Bet Head Ami Ayalon, interviewed in Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

5. The Second Intifada to Hamas's Gaza Takeover: Towards Direct Deterrence, 2000 to 2007

The period leading up to the Second Intifada was full of dark predictions of renewed unrest should the peace process fail. The fact that Palestinians hailed Arafat as a hero upon his return from the failed Camp David talks illustrates that they thought Palestinians had offered too many concessions already and that they were losing faith in Oslo.¹ Giora Eiland, then Head of the IDF's Operations Directorate, said, 'we knew that the year 2000 would be the year in which the Palestinians would try to do something violent.'²

Despite these predictions, when Ehud Barak became Prime Minister a little more than a year before the Second Intifada began, he insisted on negotiating peace with Syria first because, among other things 'a deal with Syria [would] limit Arafat's ability to manoeuvre'.³ Shin Bet head Ami Ayalon warned Barak: '[I]f we don't have something with the Palestinians within twelve months from now we shall surely have a disaster. We are losing them as a partner.'⁴ Barak's 'Syria first' approach was dangerous because, if Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (PA) no longer had faith in the peace process nor thought they had anything to gain from cooperation with Israel, their incentive to be seen keeping Hamas in check would be reduced.

The 'indirect deterrence' relationship between Israel, the PA and Hamas relied

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- 1 Ibrahim Barzak, "Palestinians Offer Arafat a Hero's Welcome," *Associated Press International*, July 26, 2000, sec. International News, Nexis UK.
 - 2 Giora Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland, interview by Brooke Lapping, 2005, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.
 - 3 Other reasons included the fact that the Golan Heights issue was simpler and that peace with Syria would isolate the anti-Israel powers Iraq and Iran. See subsequent footnote.
 - 4 Ahron Bregman, *Elusive Peace: How the Holy Land Defeated America* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 26.

heavily on the alignment of interests between Israel and the PA provided by the Oslo Accords. As former Shin Bet head Ami Ayalon recalls, PA leaders told him: ‘We don’t put Hamas members in prison for your sake. We only do it because our people believe that at the end of the day we’ll have a state beside Israel. When we no longer believe that, forget about us.’⁵ President Arafat and Prime Minister Barak’s failure to reach a peace deal at Camp David in 2000 and the outbreak of the Second (or ‘Al Aqsa’) Intifada thereafter, strained relations between Israel and the PA to the breaking point, driving their interests to diverge. This divergence destroyed the ‘indirect deterrence’ of Hamas that had grown out of the Israel-PA cooperation of the Oslo period. Moreover, particularly under the leadership of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel became less concerned with how its actions might affect its relationship with the PA, the Arab world, or the United States, and instead intensified efforts directly to combat, deter, and deny Hamas success. The September 11th, 2001 terror attacks on New York’s World Trade Centre and US President Bush’s ‘War on Terror’ meant that Sharon enjoyed at least US acquiescence in these direct actions.

The two most important of these direct actions were the construction of the West Bank security barrier and the targeted killing of Hamas’s leadership. The former made it much more difficult for Hamas suicide bombers to cross into Israel to carry out attacks, eventually playing a large role in Hamas’s shift away from suicide tactics. The latter disrupted Hamas’s operations (building bombs was a skill that had to be perfected) and alarmed Hamas’s leadership enough to cause it specifically to demand a halt to targeted killings during ceasefire negotiations. The breakdown in the three-way ‘indirect deterrence’ relationship between Israel, the PA, and Hamas thus initially led to a vast increase in violence, but later to a more direct situation of deterrence between Hamas

5 Ami Ayalon, interviewed in: Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*, DVD, Documentary, (2013).

and Israel.

The year 2000 thus saw a situation arise whereby Arafat and the PA thought they had more to gain through violence, as Arafat had calculated with the 1996 tunnel riots (see chapter 3), causing the relative stability of the prevailing indirect deterrence relationship to disintegrate. All that was needed was a spark to ignite unrest again and dissolve the relationship between Israel, the PA, and Hamas altogether.

5.1 The outbreak of the Second Intifada: The collapse of the indirect deterrence relationship

On 25 September 2000, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat flew to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's home in Israel to discuss re-starting the negotiations that had collapsed so dramatically at Camp David. Arafat and his delegation had heard that a member of Israel's Knesset (parliament), Ariel Sharon, was planning to visit the Temple Mount (known to Arabs as the Haram al-Sharif). Mohammed Dahlan, Arafat's security chief for the Gaza Strip, claims the only reason Arafat had agreed to see Barak was to stop Sharon 'from going to the mosque [on the Temple Mount]'. 'We were 100% convinced that this would explode the situation.'⁶ Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat recalls Arafat begging Barak before he left his home 'Please, please, please, your excellency, don't allow Sharon to come to Haram'. Barak recalls replying: 'Mr. Chairman, *anyone* can visit Temple Mount. That includes Israeli MPs. It's not a closed military zone.' This somewhat contradicts a statement he later made, in which he

⁶ Mohammed Dahlan, interview by Brooke Lapping, October 27, 2004, Original Records for BBC Documentary "Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs," Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

admitted: 'I could stop him, but politically, what would I gain?'⁷ Ariel Sharon thus visited the Temple Mount on 28 September 2000, exclaiming, 'The Temple Mount is in our hands and will remain in our hands', though he also said 'I came here with a message of peace. I believe that we can live together with the Palestinians'.⁸ Interviewed later, he insisted that his intentions were benign, that he had been to the Temple Mount many times before, and that the intifada 'started before' his visit, anyway.⁹ Sharon's conciliatory remarks notwithstanding, riots did begin after his visit to the Temple Mount, as feared. Many, like Suha Arafat, Yasser Arafat's wife; Mamdouh Nawfal, Arafat's then Advisor on Internal Affairs and a member of the Palestinian Supreme National Security Council; and Shin Bet mole Mosab Hassan Yousef; claim that Arafat himself put together the protests that began the Second Intifada, using Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount as a pretext.¹⁰ Whatever the case, the protests spread through the West Bank first. The next day, Israeli police fired on Palestinian protesters, killing seven.¹¹ The escalating situation caused almost immediate damage to cooperation between Israel and the PA. Dahlan recounts:

On Friday I spoke with [Israeli Chief of Staff Shaul] Mofaz in the evening, and I asked him that no confrontations should take place in Gaza, and if the people demonstrate, let them demonstrate, do not let your soldiers use arms. We will let the Palestinian police try to control the demonstrations. The demonstrations started by 10 o'clock in the morning, 14 Palestinian civilian martyrs were killed all over the Gaza

7 Dan Edge, Mark Anderson, and Juliet Stevenson, *Elusive Peace Israel and the Arabs*, Documentary, Israel and the Arabs (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2005), pt. I, www.pbs.org.

8 Suzanne Goldenberg, "Rioting as Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site," *The Guardian*, September 29, 2000, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel>; Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*.

9 Ariel Sharon, Interview with Ariel Sharon, interview by Brooke Lapping, Tape, September 18, 2005, Original Records for BBC Documentary "Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs," Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

10 JPost.com Staff, "'Suha Arafat Admits Husband Premeditated Intifada,'" *www.JPost.com*, December 29, 2012, Online edition, sec. Middle East, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Suha-Arafat-admits-husband-premeditated-Intifada>; Mosab Hassan Yousef and Ron Brackin, *Son of Hamas* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2010), 127–131; Itamar Marcus and Jacques Zilberdik, "Arafat Planned and Led the Intifada: Testimonies from PA Leaders and Others," *Palestinian Media Watch*, November 28, 2011, http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=5875.

11 Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*, pt. I.

Strip. He tried to call me back and I told him it's over... he wanted me to intervene, to stop something that I told him in advance that I cannot control... Then he wanted me to meet with him in Gaza and I refused.¹²

Cooperation between Israel and the PA was therefore already strained. The opinion on the Palestinian street had shifted against negotiations (see Figure 5.1 below), putting Arafat in a near-impossible position. Passions on the street were such that Arafat could not now simply ask for calm and regain control without taking harsher measures—measures that would damage his image and credibility in Palestinian eyes, as he would appear to be siding with Israel against the Palestinian people. As Dahlan put it, when Colin Powell months later visited Arafat in his compound in Ramallah, 'He was clear in his demands, and also clear in his threats, but he realized, or did not realize, that the response would be negative, because President Arafat cannot—does not have the authority of the power to have a ceasefire. But the painful issue is that the US and Israel do not believe that he does not have the authority, they thought he is a magician.' Arafat himself did not want to admit he could not stop the Intifada, however: 'He doesn't want to say to you that he doesn't have the capability, but believe me, he does not have the capability.'¹³

¹² Dahlan, interview.

¹³ Ibid.

Palestinian support for the Oslo agreement

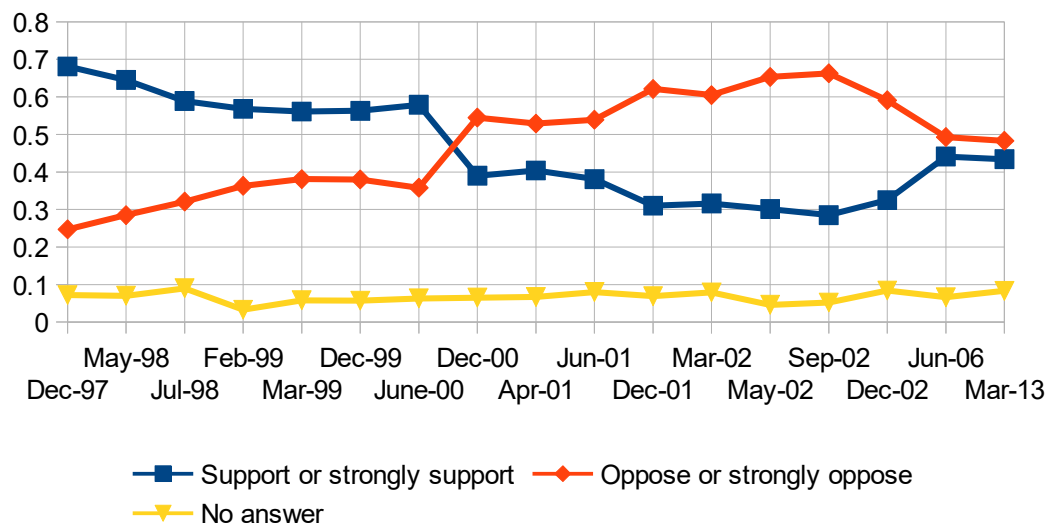


Figure 5.1: Palestinian response to the question: 'What's your opinion of the Oslo agreement? Would you say that you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose it?'¹⁴

Arafat might have been willing to act more forcefully against the uprising if he could have reaped substantial political gains as a result, however. After he won the election, but before taking office, Sharon met with Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) and Abu Ala (Ahmed Qurie) and told them he was willing to allow the PA to create a state on the 42% of the West Bank and Gaza that were already under full or partial Palestinian control. The idea behind this was that two states could then engage in negotiations on remaining issues, including borders.¹⁵ By the end of February 2001, before Sharon's government had even taken office, they had 'a secret but written understanding'. Arafat and Sharon would meet, Israel would withdraw to the positions it held before the Second Intifada in exchange for Arafat's condemnation of violence and a

14 Charmaine Seitz, "Tracking Palestinian Public Support over 20 Years of the Oslo Agreements" (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, November 2013), <http://www.jmcc.org/Documentsandmaps.aspx?id=864>.

15 Bregman, *Elusive Peace*, 153.

pledge to fight terrorism. Israel and the PA would resume security cooperation and Israel would engage in the symbolic release of 40 Palestinian prisoners. Final status negotiations would begin in April. 'A senior Palestinian who was involved in these secret talks says, "everything was agreed and ready down to the nitty gritty"', but Arafat backed out at the last minute because he did not wish to re-start talks with the Israelis before the Arab summit in Amman at the end of March 2001. He thus missed what was to be his only chance at a working relationship with Sharon.¹⁶ Without that working relationship, 'indirect deterrence' was doomed.

Hamas member and Shin Bet mole Mosab Hassan Yousef asserts 'Hamas had been all but dead before the Second Intifada.'¹⁷ Within days of the start of riots, however, the PA released most of the Hamas members held in its prisons, allowing the group to regain its strength.¹⁸ 'It didn't take long at all [to rebuild the Qassam Brigades]. The rebuilt organization wasn't big, but it was deadly.'¹⁹ He claims the reason behind this was to 'send [Hamas] in for another round so the PA could knock it cold again before a cheering crowd.'²⁰ If that was the intention, however, then Arafat had overestimated his and the PA's ability to retain control of the situation. About six weeks later, Hamas committed its first two bombings of the Second Intifada. The first, on 22 November, consisted of a bomb left near a bus in Hadera. 'At least two people were killed and another 29 injured.'²¹ A second bomb in late December killed no one, but

16 Ibid.

17 Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 142.

18 "URGENT--- Palestinians Release Most Detained Hamas Prisoners," *Agence France Presse*, October 12, 2000, sec. International News.

19 Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 211.

20 Ibid., 127-128.

21 "Hamas Cannot Confirm or Deny Hadera Bomb, but Says Israel Should Be Hit," *Agence France Presse*, November 22, 2000, sec. International News; Qassam Brigades claim responsibility: Gil Hoffman, "Expert Blames Hamas for Hadera Attack," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 24, 2000, sec. News.

injured 14.²² Hamas launched its first suicide attack of the Second Intifada on 1 January 2001, which succeeded only in killing the bomber himself, who died later in the hospital, but did wound 19 others.²³ Its next attack in early March killed four (including the bomber) and wounded ‘dozens’.²⁴

These incidents marked the beginning of several years of suicide attacks against Israel, but three related events in particular stand out because, together, they changed Israel’s strategic thinking. The first of these three events was the capture by Israel of the *Karine A*, a ship bound for the PA loaded with weapons and explosives prohibited by the Oslo Accords. The plan was for the ship to sail close to Gazan waters and dump the weapons overboard in barrels to be collected by the commander of Palestine’s naval police.²⁵ US Special Envoy General Anthony Zinni, who was preparing to meet with Arafat to discuss a ceasefire between the Palestinian factions and Israel, was infuriated when he found out about the ship. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage recalls: ‘Zinni called me and he was really pissed off. He asked me if I knew about it [the *Karine A*] and I was hearing about it for the first time, so I joined him in the pissed off club. All of us were very sceptical that Yasser Arafat was as Lilly white on the thing as he wanted to make out.’²⁶ Colin Powell explained that, though he could not prove that Arafat knew about it or had authorized it, ‘it’s close enough that the [Palestinian] Authority has to take responsibility for it’. US sympathy for Arafat was severely damaged.

22 Charles Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks,” *Database of Hamas Terror Attacks*, January 2015, www.hamasterrordatabase.com.

23 Ibid.; It is not entirely clear whether this was meant to be a suicide attack, though the Qassam Brigades labelled it as such after the fact. See: “Hamas Announces Death of Own Militant in Netanya ‘Suicide Attack,’” *Agence France Presse*, January 9, 2001, sec. International News.

24 “Hamas Claims Responsibility for Israel Suicide Bombing,” *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2001, sec. International News.

25 Bregman, *Elusive Peace*, 169.

26 Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*, pt. II.

Sharon decided to take advantage of the momentum provided to Israel by the Karine A affair by killing Arafat's guerilla commanders one by one. The first target was to be Raed Karmi, who had long evaded Israel. As Defence Minister Ben-Eliezer saw it, however, there was a problem with the plan. 'There was a time when we could have done it. But it now could do more harm than good. There's a ceasefire. This will end it.' Giora Eiland, now head of the IDF's planning directorate and also involved in talks between the Israeli government and the Palestinians, argued then that cooperating with the PA made more sense:

The question was brought... whether or not to carry out an operation against Karmi, the question was whether we understood correctly the effects of the 11th September event on the world situation, and I think some of us did not understand it correctly. ...the leaders of the world... moved from supporting the Palestinians to supporting us. ...Arafat often creates ceasefires, and usually [doesn't mean] it, but this time he actually meant it, and gave orders which were really carried out, and there was quite a significant reduction, diminishing of terrorism from the middle of December to the middle of January. ...[I]n this context, the question of whether or not to carry out an operation which naturally could lead the Palestinians back into violence was more than a tactical question, but quite more a strategic one. ...our insistence on any continued dialogue beginning with seven days of complete quiet seemed to me like a mistake... because at least some of the Palestinian people, the (NAME) [sic], and others, were under real pressure... all as a result of the 11th of September and its effect on world public opinion and demands of Palestinians. ... [W]e thought it was an opportunity to try to [return] to security cooperation with the Palestinians to try to achieve some quiet [because] many of them were of the opinion that this armed struggle was only leading them into bad places and it was best to stop it. And regarding this I wrote a paper, which in the end I presented to the Prime Minister, in which I argued what the negative consequences would be of our continued policy, which I think was too hard-lined at the time, and did not take advantage of the opportunity after the 11th September and world public opinion.²⁷

In the end, Ben-Eliezer and Eiland found themselves in the minority and Israel went ahead with Karmi's targeted killing on 14 January 2002. As feared, killing Karmi led to 'the most frenzied killing, on both sides, in the entire Intifada'.²⁸ No organization can

27 Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland. Note that Arafat's ceasefire suggests he had greater capabilities than Dahlan claimed (see interview cited earlier).

28 Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*, pt. II.

long survive and continue to operate effectively if its upper echelons are being killed. No organization can thus tolerate a status quo in which targeted killings are continually being carried out. Targeted killing thus cannot be used for deterrence, as deterrence seeks to maintain the status quo. This means targeted killing may be an effective compellent for ending already high levels of violence, but it may leave an opponent no choice but to escalate during a period of low violence (e.g. a ceasefire) by breaking the 'conciliatory promise' implicit in a ceasefire and in deterrence, thus sparking a new round of escalation.

The second event that led Israel to change strategies followed in the months after the first. It was one of the most severe suicide bombings of the Second Intifada: that of the Park Hotel in Netanya on 27 March 2002.²⁹ The Hamas bomber set off from Tulkarm in the West Bank looking 'for any gathering of people', according to the driver, Fatri Khasib.³⁰ Eventually, they settled on the Park Hotel in Netanya. The bomber blew himself up just as Passover dinner was beginning at the hotel, killing more than 20 and injuring more than 70 others. The Park Hotel attack led Israel fundamentally to reassess its approach to Palestinian violence, particularly with regard to the Palestinian Authority and Arafat. In a 2005 interview in which he speaks about the bombing, Ariel Sharon admits: '...it's not as if I was surprised when I found out that [Arafat] couldn't do anything. I never had any expectations that he was capable or wanted to do anything... Of course he could have prevented these actions. Of course, he never attempted to do so'.³¹ One interpretation of this rather ambiguous statement is that Sharon viewed Arafat to be technically able to stop the violence but prevented from doing so by a lack of will

29 "Death Toll From Israeli Hotel Bombing Rises to 20," *Agence France Presse*, March 28, 2002, sec. International News.

30 Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*, pt. II.

31 Sharon, Interview with Ariel Sharon.

stemming, in part, from a political environment that would not allow it. Giora Eiland, who had previously supported pursuing cooperation with Arafat, was now against any further attempts. In a meeting after the attack, he recalls how he recommended a fundamental strategic shift:

The Defence Minister [Binyamin Ben-Eliezer] began by saying that the Hamas had crossed all the lines and that we have to make an operation against the Hamas, and we tried to explain to him that this was not the reality, mainly, the person who spoke out was [Moshe Ya'alon], who was Deputy Chief of Staff.... He said the problem was not the Hamas, that we didn't have any Hamas headquarters or Hamas targets which we could effectively operate against. *The problem was... the Palestinian Authority which was allowing this reality to exist*, and the only way to stop this crazy tidal wave of violence... was to recapture the Palestinian cities, and as a result *not... to rely in any way on the Palestinian Authority with regard to security...* because in the end to trust them would prove to be one big mistake. *This was a very deep strategic change.* ...[S]trategically speaking we had crossed a certain line in which we were not fighting only against those who belonged to some particular organization that was fighting against us... but that we were entering a direct and frontal fight with the Palestinian Authority.... That was the meaning of the Defensive Shield Operation [a large-scale reoccupation of Palestinian areas].³²

It is important to note here that, by recommending what was in his own words a 'deep strategic change', he tacitly accepts that Israel had relied quite heavily on the PA for security during the Oslo period. Despite this new 'direct and frontal fight with the Palestinian Authority', however, there was 'fear that an action against Arafat would, in the Arab world, and perhaps throughout the world, be considered crossing a line... and that we might jeopardize the military achievements for something political, which was unreasonable. So the decision was not to capture him, not to expel him, not to kill him, but only to isolate the *muqata* [(Arafat's compound)] area, but in fact not to act physically against him.'³³

The third event came in the wake of a number of particularly bloody attacks in

32 Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland, emphasis added.

33 Ibid.

June and July 2002, including a bus bomb in Jerusalem that killed 19 people,³⁴ a car bomb that struck a bus and killed 16 and wounded around 50 in northern Israel,³⁵ and an ambush of a bus of settlers that left seven people dead and 19 wounded.³⁶ The second attack was particularly galling, as one of the two groups claiming responsibility for it was the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, which was linked to Arafat's Fatah. These led Israel's cabinet finally to push to escape any need to rely on the Palestinian Authority. It would do so by physically stopping suicide bombers from crossing the border using the security barrier. Eiland recalls:

The events of July 2002, after Defensive Shield, showed that at least in the short run, just our presence in Palestinian cities was not enough, and that we needed another line of military action, so that if someone does come out of a Palestinian city for a suicide attack, there would be a way to stop him. So more or less in June 2002 the matter of the fence became a consensus. [Though work on the fence had already begun before then,] the sense of urgency, and the need to begin fast... and to work much faster, and to remove obstacles was mainly at the beginning of June, when it was clear that the fence was effective.³⁷

Even after the urgency of the violence of 2002 convinced Israel's cabinet to move faster to construct the barrier, it still went up 'at a snail's pace'.³⁸ Its effect on the current violence was thus minimal. Over time, however, it would force militants from Hamas and other factions to shift to tactics that could work around the barrier, primarily rocket and mortar attacks, which soon began to increase in number even as suicide attacks became less frequent (see 'section 3: direct deterrence by denial' below).

In the meantime, Israel also sought new ways directly to target Hamas. Eiland explains, 'We identified two matters which we... had not tried before. One was action

34 Charles Gibson, "Suicide Bomber in Jerusalem Kills 19," News, *World News Tonight* (New York: ABC News, June 18, 2002), Nexis UK.

35 Bregman, *Elusive Peace*, 225.

36 Michael Blum, "Deadly Bus Ambush Chills Mideast Talks," *Agence France Presse*, July 17, 2002, sec. International News.

37 Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland.

38 Daniel Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 325.

against Hamas's financial sources.... The second matter was the targeted assassinations, and who they would be directed against. It was clear that the possibility of stopping Hamas's activities, and other organizations, was by scaring them. [We had to target] the decision makers, and those people at the top... of the pyramid... in order to damage the abilities of the organization, and also in order to make them wonder if they should try to reduce their activity, even if it's for their own good.'³⁹ Over the next two years, targeted killings and the security barrier would begin to reduce Hamas attacks and decrease their deadliness (see figures 5.2 and 5.3 below), reversing the rising trend from the end of 2000 to first half of 2003 as direct deterrence measures slowly filled the void left by the collapse of indirect deterrence.

³⁹ Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland.

Deaths and casualties in Hamas suicide attacks

January 2000 through December 2007

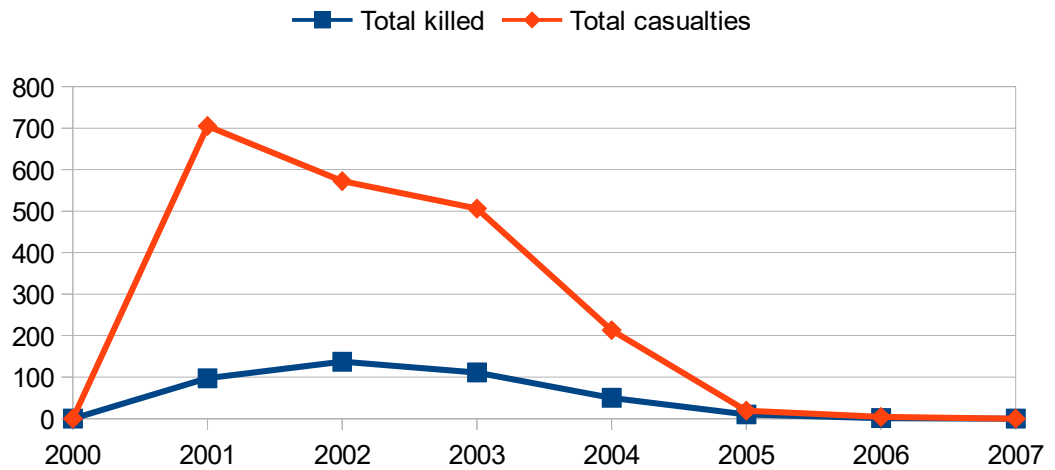


Figure 5.2

Effectiveness of Hamas suicide attacks

January 2000 through December 2007

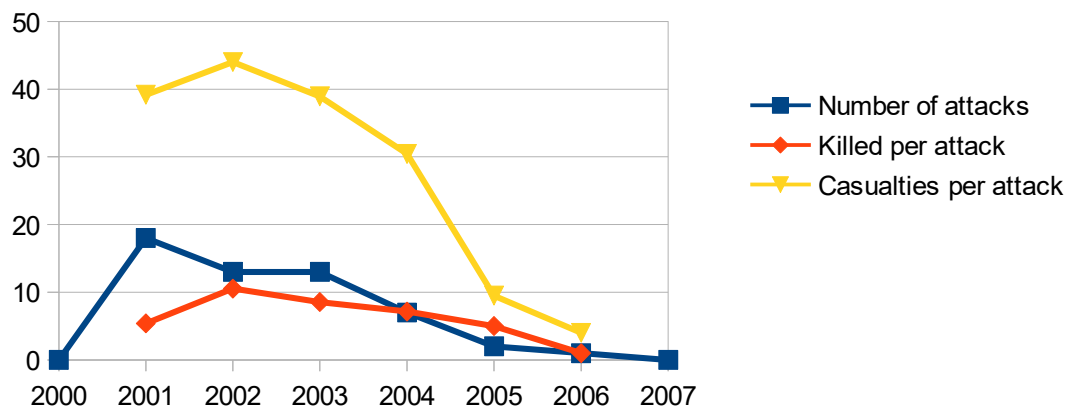


Figure 5.3⁴⁰

40 Both charts: Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

5.2 Direct deterrence by punishment: targeted killings

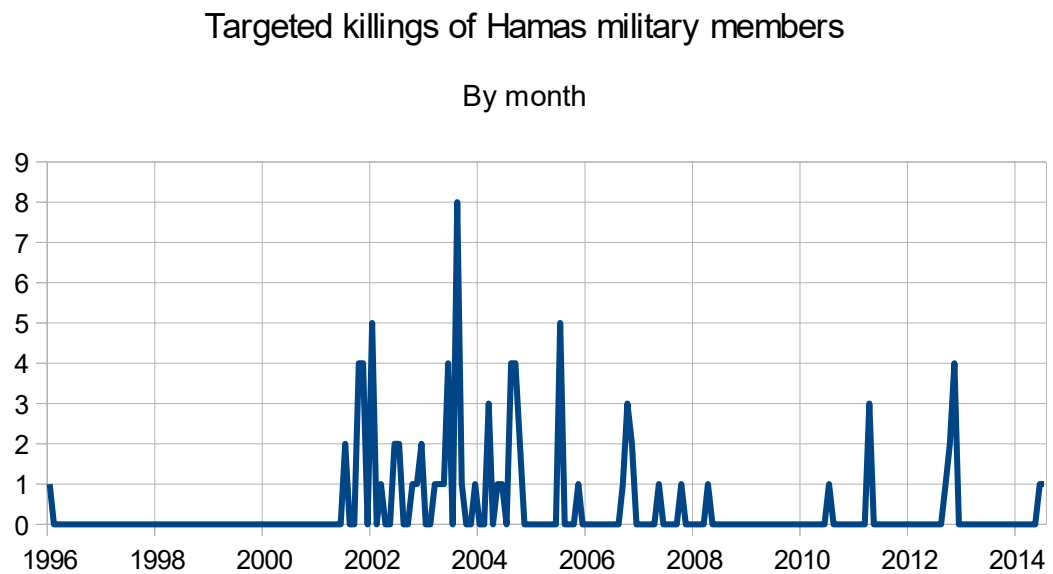


Figure 5.4: This chart shows targeted killings of Hamas militants by month.⁴¹

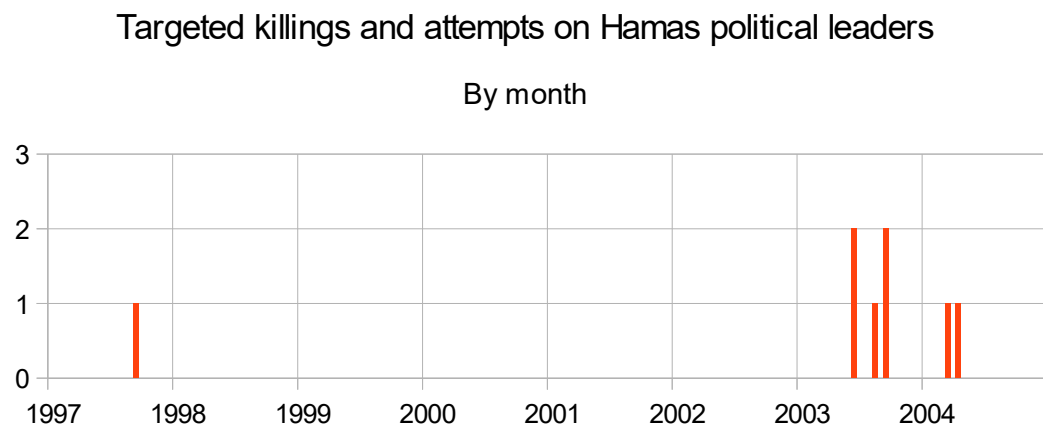


Figure 5.5: Targeted killings of Hamas political leaders. This chart includes attempts, for even they can be expected to have effects due to their relative rarity and audacity. The first incident is the attempt on Khaled Meshal in Jordan. The second includes the successful killing of Dr. Ibrahim al-Makadme and an attempt on Rantissi in June 2003. The third is the killing of Abu Shenab that August, with a fourth showing the attempts on Sheikh Yassin and Mahmoud Zahar in September. The final two represent the successful killings of Yassin and Rantissi in March and April 2004, respectively.⁴²

41 "Israeli Targeted Killings of Terrorists," *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, July 2014, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Terrorism/hits.html>.

The charts above show a dramatic increase in targeted killings in the second half of 2002, including the killing of Hamas political leaders beginning in 2003. The initial rise in targeted killings did not bring immediate gains, as violence continued apace through 2003. It began to decline after Israel started targeting Hamas's political leaders and founders, however. The effect was visible in 2004. As the former director of the IDF's Strategic Planning Division and Deputy National Security Advisor Brig. Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Brom points out, this was likely partly because the operations against militants had an 'accumulated effect'. As militants are arrested or killed, others are recruited or promoted to fill their place. 'But if the rate of draining water from the pool is faster than the rate at which it is going in, you have an accumulated effect.'⁴³ Former Shin Bet head Avi Dichter believes it has an effect beyond disruption: 'I've often said "terror is a barrel with a bottom." You can reach the bottom. You don't need to reach the last terrorist. You can reach a critical mass, and that's enough of a deterrent.'⁴⁴ Another expert on Israeli policy this author spoke with confirmed that targeted killings were intended to create a deterrent effect and asserted that they 'definitely' worked and that this effect was visible almost immediately.⁴⁵ Targeted killings also made life difficult for militants and potentially disrupted operations because others were afraid to associate with them: Taxi drivers and even barbers would refuse them service for fear of encountering trouble with Israel's security services or even of being killed alongside the

42 Ibid.; Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007); Matthew Gutman, "Hamas Takes a Blow," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 9, 2003, sec. News, Nexis UK; Oliver Knox, "Bush 'Deeply Troubled' by Israeli Strike," *Agence France Presse*, June 10, 2003, sec. Domestic, Non-Washington, General News, Nexis UK; Lara Sukhitan, "Abbas Resigns; Israel Bombs Gaza City Home in Failed Attack on Hamas Leadership," *Associated Press International*, September 6, 2003, sec. International News.

43 Shlomo Brom, Author interview via telephone, February 26, 2014.

44 Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

45 Expert on Israeli policy, Author interview in person, January 31, 2013.

militant if he were attacked.⁴⁶

Despite its continued violence, Hamas was showing signs of a change in tactics, at least, by the spring of 2003. At that point, its leaders feared internal strife with the PA more than attacks by Israel, suggesting that the prospect of attacks by PA forces could still be used to coerce it. Israel's targeted killing of Hamas members was already causing alarm, however. Hamas could see that its violence was not forcing Israel to make concessions and Israel was now hitting Hamas's financial resources and directly targeting its members. At the same time, the prospect of a ceasefire between Israel and the PA meant that there could soon be a return to the oppression Hamas felt at the hands of the PA during the late 1990s. All this meant that, having rejected elections just a few years earlier, Hamas representatives now said the organization desired elections and power-sharing, displaying a wish to join the political process for the first time. At a face-to-face meeting between Abbas and Hamas leaders in spring 2003 to discuss a ceasefire, Ziad Abu Amir, who organized the meeting on behalf of the PA, says Hamas wanted a halt to PA arrests of its members, no weapon collection, some power sharing until elections, and a promise not to place any obstacles in Hamas's way for participation in elections. 'Now with regard to conditions on the Israelis, the Hamas leaders talked about cessation of assassinations. They talked about withdrawals [from] Palestinian areas.' The Hamas leaders 'said that the most worrying element in [US President Bush's] road map... was the requirement from the PA to attack, to dismantle the infrastructure, to arrest them, which would push the Palestinians to internal violation [sic]. And they didn't want this to happen'. 'I remember one of them said, clearly, and in a very straightforward fashion, when he was asked why do you want to do the *hudna*

46 Avi Issacharoff, "In the West Bank, Wanted Militants Are Made to Feel Unwanted," *Haaretz Daily Newspaper*, November 13, 2007, sec. Israel News, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/in-the-west-bank-wanted-militants-are-made-to-feel-unwanted-1.233094>.

[ceasefire], he said to avoid internal bloodshed.’⁴⁷

Mohammed Dahlan believed Israel’s direct approach could never be as effective as the PA had been. In 2002, he asserted: ‘the Palestinian Authority should be given the opportunity to carry out its duties and its role, with no barriers, and if you can’t help, at least don’t put barriers. In other words, in 1996 we succeeded because the whole international situation helped us, and gave us a hand. I did my duty in protecting the Palestinian people first, and protecting the peace process, why the authority cannot do that now, because Israel is destroying the Palestinian Authority simply.’⁴⁸

According to Abu Amir, the ‘international situation’ remained unhelpful to the PA even after Abbas took over as Palestinian Prime Minister in March 2003. Though it was largely due to American and Israeli pressure that he became Prime Minister, the ‘Americans were indifferent.... Sharon worked hard to cut down and undermine [Abbas’s] government. He never gave one sign of support to this government, despite all the things his government tried to do, the [June 2003] truce for instance. Sharon did not reciprocate... he continued his incursions... he did not give any gesture of good will: He did not release prisoners, he did not redeploy his forces from certain Palestinian cities.’ Abbas’s support among Palestinians was lacking, too, however, at least in part due to friction with Arafat, who was not used to sharing power. Abu Amir recalled an incident at the Palestinian Legislative Council when demonstrators threatened Abbas and there was no security there to protect the Prime Minister. Abu Amir hints that this lack of security was orchestrated by Arafat.⁴⁹ In any case, the PA was in a state of disarray and likely would have found it difficult to exert the kind of force it had during the 1990s.

47 Ziad Abu Amir, Interview with Ziad Abu Amir, 2005, Original Records for BBC Documentary “Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs,” Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College London.

48 Dahlan, interview.

49 Abu Amir, Interview with Ziad Abu Amir.

In reality, Hamas's leaders need not have worried much. As Abu Amir notes, Sharon could not engage in any real negotiations with the Palestinians because of his own political situation: 'Jerusalem [is] taboo, Sharon cannot talk about. The refugees. The settlements. The borders. All of these issues are burning issues and if Sharon sat and negotiated with Abu Mazen on any one of them, his government would collapse, so it was understandable why Sharon would undermine the Abu Mazen government.'⁵⁰ Without the chance of progress on peace talks, any cease-fire would have been short-lived. It would now have been very difficult for Israel to change course away from its direct approach.

In the meantime, that direct approach continued in the form of targeted killings, which were becoming a real problem for Hamas. Inside information from Mosab Hassan Yousef supports Brom's 'water in the pool' analogy. He notes that Hamas's first official suicide bombing in 1994 'was actually the third attempt, part of a trial-and-error phase during which Hamas bomb maker Yahya Ayyash perfected his craft.'⁵¹ There may have been a nearly endless supply of potential Hamas recruits willing to blow themselves up, but planning and coordinating attacks and building bombs required skills that had to be learned and perfected. Killing or arresting members with bomb-making skills could thus certainly disrupt Hamas's ability to launch suicide attacks, at least temporarily. Similarly, there was only a finite number of top leaders, and attempts to kill them disturbed the leadership enough to compel it to consider ceasefires. Abu Amir remembers a PA team talking to Rantisi, Zahar, Haniyeh, and Abu Shenab.

The assassinations were continuing and I think this was one of the reasons why we wanted to reach an agreement, a truce. We thought this would stop Israeli assassinations, although Israel would not give any commitment. But we thought it would be embarrassing for Israel if we established a truce... while they continued

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Yousef and Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 55.

assassinations. So I think *the attempt on Rantissi's life [on 10 June 2003] was a catalyst* of some sort. Especially when certain intelligence came to the Palestinian side to the effect that Israel was determined to liquidate all the Hamas leaders. And I think the Hamas leaders and we, too, took that very seriously. And I remember I asked... are you better off with your leaders around, is Hamas better off with its founders and top leaders around, or do you think this is irrelevant? *If you think it is important... I think we have to do something political about it right now.*⁵²

Major General Giora Eiland, then head of the IDF's Planning Directorate, corroborates this sequence of events. 'The unsuccessful attempt to hit Rantisi caused Rantisi, who was one of the worst extremists among the Hamas leaders, ...to change his mind overnight and to suddenly accept requests by the Palestinian Authority and the Egyptians to give a chance to the hudna. ...the effect of the attempt on his life was immediate.'⁵³

Hamas and other factions duly informed Abbas they had agreed to a ceasefire, which went into effect on 27 June. At the same time, they told him that they now wanted reciprocity from the Israelis. The month of July 2003 thus passed without a single Hamas attack. Pressure from Israel, in the form of targeted killing and the halting of financial flows, and from the PA, in the form of a ceasefire between it and Israel and the potential repression of Hamas that would entail, had succeeded in pushing Hamas and other militant factions to accept a ceasefire along with the PA. The truce began to fray less than six weeks in, however. An Israeli raid in Nablus on 8 August led to the death of four Palestinians and one Israeli soldier. Hamas's armed wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, warned Israel would 'pay a commensurate price' for the deaths, though Hamas's political leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi stated, 'Hamas is still committed to the truce it declared but ... Zionist violations will not go unanswered'.⁵⁴ Hamas wished to

52 Abu Amir, Interview with Ziad Abu Amir, emphasis added.

53 Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland, 53–54.

54 Imad Saada, "Four Palestinians, One Soldier Killed in Israeli Raid," *Agence France Presse*, August 8, 2003, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

retaliate for the raid but keep the truce thereafter. Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades carried out two back-to-back suicide bombings that killed two Israelis and wounded 12 others.⁵⁵

Viewing the attacks on 12 August as a limited retaliation for the Israeli raid on 8 August, Abu Amir asserts that the truce was still in effect when Israel killed PIJ member Mohammed Seder in Hebron on 14 August. Amir tried in vain to convince Hamas not to give the Israelis ‘a reason to destroy the truce and resume their war on the Palestinians’, but Hamas retaliated for the attack on a member of its sister organization. The attack on a Jerusalem bus killed 19 people and wounded 139 others. The ceasefire collapsed. In retrospect, Abu Amir says, ‘the Hamas leaders later acknowledged [that their retaliation with a bus bomb] in Jerusalem [was an] overdose. How do you control retaliation? ...You don’t know how many people will be killed. ...Let’s say a few people were injured or... killed... perhaps it [the ceasefire] could have been salvaged. But that was not the case.’ He also mentioned that there were rumours that Hamas’s leadership had not planned the attack and that it was carried out by a friend or relative of Seder’s within Hamas instead, but no one knows.⁵⁶ If the attack was more deadly than planned or was unintentional, this suggests that Hamas viewed Israel’s threats as credible and harmful enough to cause it to desire the ceasefire but that it simply failed to control its organization well enough to prevent escalation. Lack of central control over forces is a classic difficulty in maintaining deterrence stability. It is particularly problematic with a group like Hamas, with political a political wing with internal and external leaderships, and a semi-autonomous military wing with multiple cells.

Israel responded to Hamas’s bus bombing by killing Ismail Abu Shenab. As with

55 Chris Otton, “Two Israelis Killed as Back-to-Back Suicide Attacks Puncture Truce,” *Agence France Presse*, August 12, 2003, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

56 Abu Amir, Interview with Ziad Abu Amir.

the killing of Karmi in January 2002, this stoked violence rather than preventing it, as Hamas had previously been minded to uphold the ceasefire with Israel and targeted killings alter the status quo. The PA's Dahlan also viewed Hamas as the defender and Israel's attacks as aggressive, undermining their attempts at negotiations. This was not only because they killed a Hamas member, but also because of *who* they killed. As Dahlan recounts, 'I was surprised that they picked a liberal person like Abu Shenab... He is the one who stood up and objected to the Jerusalem operation in public. Then he is killed. And then I realized it was a senseless waste of time to continue to talk to Sharon.'⁵⁷ Violence increased and Israel and the PA were as far apart as ever.

To try to counter the renewed violence, Israel attempted its most audacious targeted killing yet just two weeks later: that of Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. After the failed attempt, the IDF vowed to 'continue to wage a relentless war against Hamas and other terrorist organizations'. Hamas senior official Abdel Aziz Rantissi promised 'This ugly crime will not pass without a punishment, a very strong punishment,' adding that the group's armed wing, Qassam Brigades, 'must answer this crime'.⁵⁸ Three days later, Hamas launched two suicide attacks, one near a military base near Tel Aviv and one in a cafe in West Jerusalem. Together, they killed 15 Israelis plus the bombers. Israel's response was immediate. The next day, Israel bombed the home of Hamas senior leader Mahmoud Zahar, killing his eldest son and bodyguard, though only wounding Zahar himself.⁵⁹ Despite Hamas's defiant rhetoric at the time, it carried out no attacks for the rest of September. In fact, the rest of the year was quiet, with just three Israelis killed in a joint Hamas/Islamic Jihad attack on an Israeli

⁵⁷ Dahlan, interview.

⁵⁸ "Israel Confirms Attempt on Yassin, Renews Vow of 'Relentless War' on Hamas," *Agence France Presse*, September 6, 2003, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

⁵⁹ Matthew Rosenberg, "Hamas Remains Defiant Despite Intense Israeli Campaign to Wipe Out Militants," *Associated Press International*, September 11, 2003, sec. International News.

settlement in the Gaza Strip in October. Hamas launched no attacks in November and launched just one rocket attack in December, which did not result in casualties.⁶⁰

This lull in attacks was not a coincidence. The left-wing Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported in late December 2003 that, according to ‘Palestinian and other sources’, ‘senior members of Hamas’ political branch held a meeting in Doha, Qatar’ to discuss a ceasefire proposal that the Qataris later passed on to the Americans. A Hamas operative in Lebanon also reportedly met with ‘retired American officials’ there to deliver a similar proposal to end suicide attacks within Israel in exchange for a cessation of ‘assassination attempts on Hamas targets in Gaza’.⁶¹ The Palestinian Authority was in talks with several Palestinian factions about a year-long halt to attacks on Israeli civilians. Hamas publicly rejected this, but was open to a cessation of attacks on civilians within Israel proper (as it had reportedly offered previously through its Qatari and American interlocutors). The fact that it did not engage in any further suicide attacks on 2003 is evidence that it enacted its own proposed ceasefire right away. Combined with some pressure from the PA, targeted killings of its leaders had compelled Hamas to halt its attacks.

Israel, in turn, temporarily halted its attacks on Hamas militants and political leaders. It did not carry out any targeted killings in October or November, with just one in December, in which it killed a Hamas bomb maker. Hamas responded the next day by launching a rocket, which ‘landed unexploded in an agricultural field in southern Israel’, injuring no one.⁶² January saw Hamas increase attacks again, possibly in response to

60 Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

61 Arnon Regular, “Hamas Proposed a Cease-Fire via Qatari Mediators; Message Relayed to U.S.,” *Ha’aretz Daily Newspaper*, December 23, 2003, Print edition, sec. Israel News, Nexis UK, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/hamas-proposed-a-cease-fire-via-qatari-mediators-message-relayed-to-u-s-1.109551>.

62 “Qassam Rockets Fired at Southern Israel, No Injuries,” *Agence France Presse*, December 26, 2003, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

Sharon's announcement of plans to withdraw unilaterally from Gaza (see section 3 below). It launched five mortar shells in the early days of January followed by a suicide attack at the Erez crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip on 14 January.⁶³ Crucially, the PA did not condemn the suicide attack, which was a joint operation between the armed wings of Hamas and Arafat's Fatah. Instead, Arafat's chief advisor, Nabil Abu Rudeina, claimed 'Israel bears sole responsibility for what has happened as it continues the occupation, construction of the wall (Israel's West Bank security barrier), the closures and the escalation'.⁶⁴ In response, Israel sealed off the Gaza Strip and announced that it was resuming the targeted killing of senior Hamas militants.⁶⁵ Hamas did not heed this warning, instead carrying out a particularly devastating attack on the #19 bus in Jerusalem on 29 January that left 11 dead and 48 wounded.⁶⁶

Despite the increase in violence in January, February was quiet. Hamas launched no attacks, during that month and Israel did not liquidate any Hamas militants, instead killing four from Islamic Jihad. Israel finally struck back against Hamas in March, killing three senior Hamas militants in a missile strike.⁶⁷ Hamas responded by launching a rocket at Israel the next day. It caused no injuries or damage other than some 'minor damage' to nearby shops.⁶⁸ On 10 March, Israel killed five militants from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jenin. The group retaliated in a joint operation with Hamas four days later with twin suicide attacks on the port in the southern Israeli city of Ashdod. 12 days later, Israel tried again to take out Yassin—this time successfully. Hamas

63 Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

64 Adel Zaanoun, "Four Israelis Killed in Israel-Gaza Crossing Suicide Attack," *Agence France Presse*, January 14, 2004, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

65 Mark Lavie, "Security Official: Israel to Resume Targeted Killings of Hamas Activists Following Suicide Attack," *Associated Press Worldstream*, January 15, 2004, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

66 Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

67 "Israeli Targeted Killings."

68 "Palestinian Rocket Explodes in Israel; Militants Nabbed in West Bank," *Agence France Presse*, March 5, 2004, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

responded, rather feebly, by launching several rockets the same day and with a shooting attack near a Jewish settlement in the northern West Bank more than a week later. It finally committed a suicide attack on 17 April, which killed only the bomber but wounded four Israelis.⁶⁹ Israel's response was immediate: It successfully killed Abdel Aziz Rantissi the same day.⁷⁰

One might expect Hamas to respond to the targeted killing of two of its most important leaders, including Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin, with increased violence. Instead, violence declined from March, when Yassin was killed, to April. After Rantissi was killed, it declined still further: No Israelis were killed in attacks by Hamas in May 2004. The head of Hamas's external leadership, Khaled Meshal, denied that the reason Hamas did not retaliate more forcefully for the targeted killing of its leaders was because it had lost the ability to penetrate Israeli security. The reason he gave, however, contradicted that denial: He claimed the fall in suicide attacks was due to "difficulties on the ground" dictated by "a temporary extraordinary situation," such as the Israeli army's stringent measures'. In other words: Hamas was finding it very difficult to penetrate Israeli security, at least temporarily.⁷¹ It may also have been temporarily disoriented by the loss of two of its most important leaders. Hamas 'had to reorganize after Israel killed two of its main leaders, founder Yassin and Abd al-Aziz Rantisi... which also forced the group to cease to disclose its leadership structure publicly'.⁷²

Israel was indeed hitting Hamas on all fronts. As was the case in the 1990s, Hamas's external leadership found safety in a neighbouring country, this time Syria.

69 Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

70 "Israeli Targeted Killings."

71 Sam F. Ghattas, "Palestinian Militant Group's Leader Rejects Talk of Cease-Fire Amid Israeli Attacks," *Associated Press International*, May 17, 2004, sec. International News.

72 Benedetta Berti, *Armed Political Organizations: From Conflict to Integration*, Kindle edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), l. 1942.

Israel in 2004 thus made threats against Hamas's leadership in Syria and against the Syrian government itself: Deputy Defence Minister Zeev Boim told Israeli public radio 'The rule that "anyone who deals in terror against Israel is a target" is a rule that must be stated and one that we must stand behind... It is possible to launch operations, provided that the targets are well chosen and that the moment is right, in order to make the Syrians understand that there are red lines that cannot be crossed.' Boim was careful to qualify this hawkish remark by stating that Israel would be careful not to cause a 'conflagration' on its northern border. Judging that such a conflagration would not be easily ignited, Israel responded to a deadly suicide attack by the PIJ in Beersheva by attacking 'an alleged Palestinian militant training camp deep inside Syria.'⁷³ This hard line had an impact on Hamas in Damascus, if only temporarily: Hamas leaders in Damascus reportedly fled for Lebanon (where they were 'looked after' by Hezbollah) and Qatar after Israel's above warning.⁷⁴ Aside from the rather ineffectual attack mentioned above, Hamas carried out only one further, admittedly devastating, suicide attack in 2004 in August. Instead, it began to rely increasingly on rockets and mortars. These killed and injured far fewer people and thus provoked less of a response from Israel than suicide attacks. Perhaps more importantly, however, they could fly over the security barrier, which was helping to make suicide attacks within Israel considerably more difficult.

73 "Israel Threatens Syria Strike after Deadly Bombings," *Agence France Presse*, September 2, 2004, Nexis UK.

74 Khaled Abu Toameh, "Hamas Brass Flees Syria," *The Jerusalem Post*, September 6, 2004, sec. News, Nexis UK.

5.3 Direct deterrence by denial: the security barrier and a political opening

Israel's West Bank security barrier is highly controversial, but evidence suggests that it is also highly effective. As the Israeli military historian Martin van Creveld points out: 'History shows that walls, provided people are prepared to do what is necessary to defend them and prevent other people from crossing them, by using lethal force if necessary, work.'⁷⁵ He notes that stand-offs between Soviet and American tanks in Berlin, common between 1958 and 1961, came to an immediate and almost complete end after the Wall was erected. Furthermore, the 'heavily fortified fence that separates the two Koreas has been working for fifty years; the one that separates Greek Cypriots from Turkish ones for thirty. ... The latter has helped bring relations between the two communities to the point where few people can so much as remember when the last incident took place' and there is now even talk of pulling the barrier down.'⁷⁶ As far as Israel is concerned, there was a precedent for the West Bank barrier: the barrier along the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip, which was built between 1993 and 1996. Only one suicide attack carried out in Israel originated from the Gaza Strip, when two bombers hid in a container that passed through the Karni crossing before blowing themselves up in Ashdod on 14 March 2004.⁷⁷ 'In 2000-2003 125 suicide bombers crossed from the West Bank into Israel.' Many of these were successful. 'During the same period... the fence that surrounds Gaza has worked very well indeed. ...throughout the Uprising it kept terrorists out almost entirely. It compelled them to confine their

⁷⁵ Martin Van Creveld, *Defending Israel: A Controversial Plan Toward Peace*, 1st ed (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2004), 66.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁷ Etgar Lefkovits, "Karni Guard Let Bombers Pass," *Jerusalem Post*, March 31, 2004, sec. News.

operations to Israeli targets inside the Strip—of which, unfortunately, there [was] no shortage.’⁷⁸ Writing in 2003 or early 2004, before the effects of work on the West Bank barrier were discernible, he predicted that a well constructed and defended barrier (his preference was for a wall rather than a fence) would reduce attacks on Israelis protected by it.

The length of Israel’s border with the West Bank, the incompleteness of the barrier, and the fact that there are many more Palestinians and Israelis living close to one another on each side, makes the task the barrier there must perform more difficult and its effects harder to assess. Nevertheless, the evidence supports Van Creveld’s prediction that a barrier would provide security. By 2004, construction of the security barrier was about half complete.⁷⁹ Crucially, this first half of the barrier separated Israel proper from Palestinian areas from which suicide bombers had been most likely to originate, particularly the north-western West Bank.⁸⁰ The evidence suggests that, while the barrier has never stopped crossings into Israel altogether, it was already making them more difficult, making suicide and sabotage operations more costly and risky for Hamas and other militant groups. Hillel Frisch of the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies uses several tests to establish the efficacy of the security barrier in comparison to offensive measures Israel was also undertaking. His most useful test compares changes in levels of violence in areas within the Green Line that became protected by the security barrier during this period and changes in areas within the Green Line where

78 Van Creveld, *Defending Israel*, 68–69.

79 George Gavrilis, “Sharon’s Endgame for the West Bank Barrier,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (Autumn 2004): 7–20.

80 Zohar Palti, “Israel’s Security Fence: Effective in Reducing Suicide Attacks from the Northern West Bank,” Policy Analysis, PolicyWatch (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 7, 2004), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/israels-security-fence-effective-in-reducing-suicide-attacks-from-the-north>.

no barrier was yet built or even under construction.⁸¹ The results of this test are particularly sturdy due to the combination of a longitudinal analysis, which controls for variations between locations that may have nothing to do with the barrier, and multiple case studies, which control for effects over time (such as an overall decline in violence) that may also be unrelated to the barrier. The results are strikingly clear: ‘While fatalities within [the Green Line] declined to significantly less than half in areas parallel to where the fence existed, they more than doubled in areas bordering Judea and Samaria where no border existed.’⁸² As Frisch also notes, these numbers illustrate a particularly challenging aspect of deterrence-by-denial: the tendency for attackers simply to substitute easier targets once certain targets have become more difficult to attack. It also clearly shows that attackers were no less motivated to cross than before. Moreover, it suggests that more than pure defence was involved: It was not that attackers were trying and failing to cross the barrier, they were instead deciding not to bother and to attack easier targets instead. In other words: Hamas was deterred by denial from targets protected by the barrier.

Militant leaders themselves have admitted that the barrier makes attacks more difficult. On 11 November 2006, Islamic Jihad leader Abdallah Ramadan Shalah said on Al-Manar TV that terrorist organizations wished to continue suicide bombing attacks, but that this was not entirely within their control. He said ‘the separation fence... is an obstacle to the resistance, and if it were not there the situation would be entirely different.’⁸³ In a March 2008 interview in Al-Sharq, he admitted again that the security

81 His other tests were less robust because they assumed, among other things, that the barrier made no difference in security while under construction, only once the first section was complete, or failed to control for other possible causes of changes in the level of violence.

82 Hillel Frisch, “(The) Fence or Offense? Testing the Effectiveness of ‘the Fence’ in Judea and Samaria,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, October 2007), 21.

83 Mitchell Bard, “Background & Overview of Israel’s Security Fence,” *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, July 2005, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/fence.html>.

barrier ‘limits the ability of the resistance... to carry out suicide bombing attacks’.⁸⁴ The barrier also reduced successful suicide attacks, even as arrests of attempted bombers increased. ‘Between October 2000 and July 2003, the date of completion of the first phase (known as Stage A) of construction of the fence along [the] northwestern rim of the West Bank, thirty-five “successful” suicide attacks [originated] from the northern West Bank alone. In contrast, since Stage A was completed last summer, only three “successful” suicide attacks have originated from the northern West Bank.’⁸⁵ This fall in successful attacks was not for a lack of trying. The numbers instead suggest that the barrier helped Israeli security to apprehend more bombers. ‘Since January 2004, nineteen suicide bomb belts have been discovered, all originating from Nablus and designated for use by suicide bombers in Israel.’⁸⁶ The barrier was thus working to reduce the odds of attacks’ success, though it had not yet resulted in overall deterrence-by-denial: Hamas had not yet decided to abandon suicide attacks altogether in favour of methods that could circumvent the barrier, like rockets, though the number of rockets Hamas fired did rise steadily into 2004 (see figure 5.6 below), again showing Hamas’s continued will to attack Israel.

The barrier’s effect extends beyond simply slowing down crossings, which continue to this day even across sections of land where the barrier is complete.⁸⁷ It helps catch militants by magnifying the effects of other Israeli counterterrorism efforts and intelligence. The barrier along the north-west border forces bombers south, especially to Jerusalem and its surroundings, allowing Israel to focus its attention there. ‘From the start of 2004, about 2,000 Palestinians have been apprehended. Of those arrests, fifty-

84 Quoted in: Byman, *A High Price*, 328.

85 Palti, “Israel’s Security Fence.”

86 Ibid.

87 Unofficial estimates the author heard from Israelis and Palestinians ranged from 5,000 to 25,000 crossings per week. In any event, no one asserts that the barrier is even close to 100% effective.

eight were suicide bombers caught in the West Bank.’⁸⁸ The longer path into Israel also gives Israeli intelligence more time and opportunities to foil an attack. Travelling south from Jenin or Nablus means ‘different terrorist cells would have to work together, exposing themselves to Israeli counterterrorism in the process.... “One plus one is eleven” when it comes to counterterrorism, [former Shin Bet head Avi] Dichter contends, arguing that this expansion of the operation’s circle from one cell to another offers exponentially more opportunities for disruption.’⁸⁹ By 2004, Shin Bet claims it ‘was able to stop 95 percent of the attempted attacks on Israel, capturing almost every suicide bomber who dared attempt crossing into Israel’.⁹⁰ Increased checkpoints and improved intelligence within the West Bank will also have played a role, but there is little doubt that the reduced number of crossing points between the West Bank and Israel made carrying out suicide bombing operations considerably more difficult and assisted Israeli security in foiling such attempts.

At the same time, and in a sign of a further ‘substitution effect’, rockets, which are impervious to the security barrier, were raining down in increasing numbers in 2004, suggesting militants were responding to the difficulties presented by the security barrier by changing tactics (see figure 5.6 below). Hamas had carried out seven suicide attacks in 2004, but carried out just two in 2005. In the spring of 2006, moreover, Hamas declared that it would no longer use suicide attacks. ‘The suicide bombings happened in an exceptional period and they have now stopped. They came to an end as a change of belief.’⁹¹ In fact, Hamas continued to use suicide bombings intermittently, carrying out one later that year and two in 2008.⁹² Nevertheless, the age of constant Palestinian

⁸⁸ Palti, “Israel’s Security Fence.”

⁸⁹ Byman, *A High Price*, 328.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 153.

⁹¹ Conal Urquhart, “Hamas in Call to End Suicide Bombings,” *The Observer*, April 9, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/apr/09/israel>.

⁹² Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

suicide bombings, at least those originating within the Palestinian territories, seems to have come to a permanent end.⁹³ The barrier and the improved active security it helps make possible have deterred Hamas from all but occasional suicide attacks not by making such attacks *impossible*, but by making them *costly*, in particular with regard to the intelligence Israeli security can gain from captured bombers.

Deaths and casualties in Hamas rocket and mortar attacks

January 2000 through December 2007

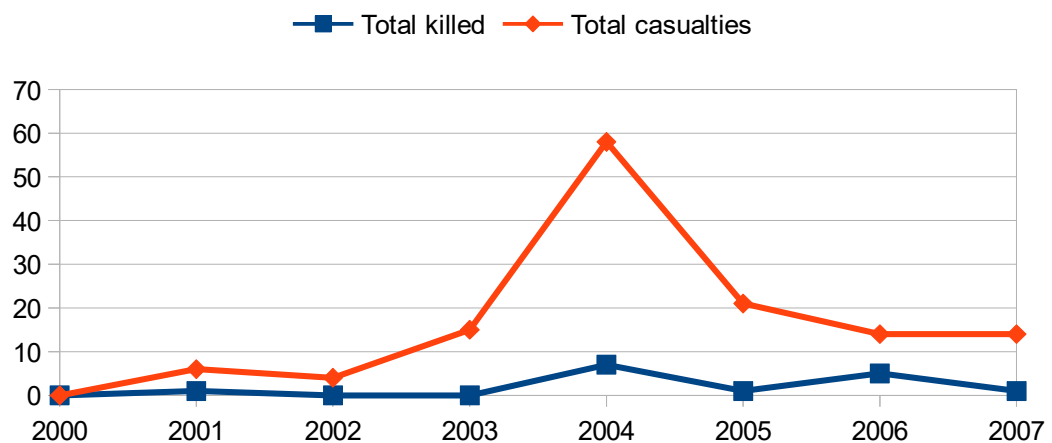


Figure 5.6⁹⁴

At the same time as the security barrier was going up, Ariel Sharon made an announcement one would expect to undermine deterrence-by-denial. At a conference in Herzliya, Israel, on 18 December 2003, he announced ‘I want to say to the Palestinians: It is not in our interest to govern you. We will not remain in all the places where we are today.’ He continued to say that Israel would be withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and removing 8,000 Israeli settlers from there. At the same time, however, he proclaimed:

93 Note that this does not exclude the possibility of an eventual slew of bombings from disaffected Arab-Israeli citizens residing within Israel and thus not restricted by the security barrier.

94 Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks” Note that there is no chart for the “effectiveness” of rocket and mortar attacks because appropriate data are not available. Many attacks consist of volleys of several rockets and mortars. The exact number of projectiles is often unknown, making extracting the casualties or deaths per projectile impossible. The disparities in the number of projectiles per attack also make calculating effectiveness “per attack” impossible.

‘As part of this disengagement plan, Israel will strengthen its control over areas of Greater Israel. These will be an integral part of the State of Israel in any future agreement.’⁹⁵ This referred to large settlement blocs mostly near the green line to the apparent, eventual, and theoretical exclusion of isolated settlements deeper inside the West Bank. Sharon received backing from the US on both the withdrawal from Gaza and the policy of stopping terror before negotiating, as Sharon’s senior advisor Dov Weisglass explains: ‘What’s important is the formula that asserts that the eradication of terrorism precedes the start of the political process.’⁹⁶

Sharon’s announcement came near the peak of the Second Intifada. Attacks were still frequent, giving the appearance that violence was forcing Israel to withdraw from territory and dismantle settlements. Regarding withdrawing from Lebanon in 2000, Giora Eiland had said: ‘Since we assessed the year 2000 would be the year in which the Palestinians would try to do something, and look for an excuse to do something, then withdrawing from Lebanon in a way that would be interpreted as running away, we thought it would be dangerous.’⁹⁷ His fear was that a withdrawal would damage Israel’s reputation and credibility, thus encouraging further attacks by undermining deterrence.

To Palestinian militants, this did indeed look like a success for armed struggle. Sheikh Nafez Azzam, a PIJ leader, told the Associated Press, ‘This is a new language by the Israelis, and this is an evidence that the uprising has created a new fact on the ground’.⁹⁸ Abbas al Sayyad, planner of Hamas’s infamous suicide bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya, also saw it that way: ‘The [Park Hotel] operation... made them [Israelis] begin to think about the rights of Palestinians. Now we’re talking about

95 Edge, Anderson, and Stevenson, *Elusive Peace*, pt. III.

96 Chemi Shalev et al., *Ariel Sharon: A Study in Controversy: Reports, Interviews and Eulogies from Haaretz*, Haaretz E-Books (Tel Aviv: Haaretz, 2014), l. 1541.

97 Eiland, Interview with Giora Eiland.

98 Dan Perry, “URGENT Sharon: Israel Will ‘Cut Off’ from Palestinians without Peace Moves,” *Associated Press International*, December 18, 2003, sec. International News.

retreating from Gaza.... It was the biggest operation in the Intifada, at least until that date. And it, it found a, a positive response among the Palestinian population, that this was a way that we would achieve our rights.’⁹⁹ Kobi Michael of Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies and former Deputy Director and head of the Palestinian desk at Israel’s Ministry for Strategic Affairs, admits ‘I think that they believe that [Israel withdrew from Gaza because of the Second Intifada], I think that this is the common perception among the Palestinians, not only in the Gaza Strip, I think that among the Palestinians as a whole. I think that they have very good reasons to think so.’¹⁰⁰ He also contends, however, that this perception is ‘totally wrong’ and that Sharon did it for different strategic reasons, mainly to strengthen Israel’s hold on the more important large settlement blocks in the West Bank, for which he also received the official approval of US President George W. Bush.¹⁰¹ He points out that ‘the disengagement from the Gaza Strip was accomplished at the end of August, the beginning of September, 2005. This is the end of the Second Intifada. It’s pretty calm and it’s pretty understood that Israel actually won the Second Intifada’.¹⁰²

Whether Sharon initiated the disengagement due to the violence of the Second Intifada or not, however, matters less than the belief common among Palestinians that this was the reason. One would expect this to undermine the long-term deterrence-by-denial that lies at the heart of Jabotinsky’s Iron Wall strategy for eventual peace with the Arabs by showing that violence against Israel was not, in fact, futile. Moreover, Sharon’s threat that Israel’s disengagement would come ‘only in the event that the Palestinians continue to drag their feet and postpone implementation of the Roadmap’

99 Abbas Al Sayyad, Interview with Abbas al Sayyad, January 30, 2005, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College London.

100Kobi Michael, Author Interview in person, June 10, 2014.

101Shalev et al., *Ariel Sharon: A Study in Controversy*, l. 1608.

102Michael, interview.

could easily be interpreted as ‘If violence continues, Israel will leave Gaza and take its settlers with it’.¹⁰³ In effect, Sharon gave Hamas and other militant groups a clear ‘road map’ of his own for getting Israel out of Gaza: continue the violence. We would thus expect to see an increase in violence, or at least no reduction, as a result of Sharon’s announcement.

While it is impossible to pinpoint causation in such a complex situation with many possible inputs and relatively few outputs (attacks), the data do, in fact, show a rise in violence in the short term. As mentioned in section 2 above, Israel’s targeting of Hamas political leaders in August and September of 2003 was followed by three months of relative calm between the two parties amid discussion of a one-year cessation of attacks in Israel proper: There were no suicide attacks in the last quarter of 2003 and Israel did not attempt to kill any additional members of Hamas’s political leadership. Hamas began suicide bombing again in January, less than a month after Sharon vowed to pull out of Gaza if the violence continued. The overall trend in violence in 2004 was, however, downward. Israel responded to the increase in Hamas’s attacks at the beginning of the year by killing two of the most important members of the latter’s political leadership: Hamas founder Sheikh Yassin, in March, and his replacement, Abdel Aziz Rantissi, in April. The result was a fall in violence. At the same time, the security barrier was helping Israeli security reportedly to apprehend ‘95 percent of the attempted attacks on Israel’ from within the Palestinian territories.¹⁰⁴ It is thus very plausible that Sharon’s plan encouraged further attacks, but that this was more than compensated for in the medium term with targeted killing and increased security

103Ariel Sharon, “Address by PM Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, December 18, 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2003/Pages/Address%20by%20PM%20Ariel%20Sharon%20at%20the%20Fourth%20Herzliya.aspx>.

104Byman, *A High Price*, 153.

measures. Sharon's announcement, whether through intent or serendipity, was thus well timed.

Just as Hamas's military activities were becoming more difficult, weighed down by disruption, the capture and killing of operatives, the security barrier, and a shift in public opinion away from violence, changes were afoot in the political arena that granted Hamas potential opportunities to advance its agenda, much of which had always focused on domestic policy, along political rather than military lines. Yassir Arafat was flown to a Jordanian military base on 29 October 2004, from where a French hospital plane flew him to Paris for treatment of an as yet undiagnosed illness.¹⁰⁵ Less than two weeks later, in the early hours of 11 November, he had died.¹⁰⁶

'Hamas... had been deliberating within its own ranks inside and outside Palestine as to what its strategy in the post-Arafat era should be. One priority was to decide whether to participate in the legislative elections Mahmud Abbas promised to conduct on 17 July 2005.'¹⁰⁷ Hamas was already proving it was capable of performing well in elections. During the second round of stage one of municipal elections on 25 January 2005 in Gaza, it won seven of 10 councils for total of 78 of 118 seats. Following a second-place showing in the first round of municipal elections in December 2004, this result encouraged many Hamas members to push to take part in the coming Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, with Hamas's members in Gaza particularly enthusiastic (while its members in Hebron, in particular, remained pessimistic). The external leadership, as well, was 'cautiously supportive'.¹⁰⁸

Izzat al-Rishiq, a member of Hamas's Political Bureau, explained Hamas's

105Mohammed Daraghme, "Arafat Heading to Paris for Treatment in First Trip Abroad Since 2001," *Associated Press International*, October 29, 2004, sec. International News.

106"World Leaders Who Have Died Lingered Deaths," *Agence France Presse*, November 11, 2004.

107Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch, 2011), 209.

108Ibid., 210.

eventual decision to participate thus: Extensive consultations within the movement came to the conclusion that ‘our participation should in no way prejudice our commitment to safeguard our people’s legitimate rights and to protect the programme of resistance as a strategic option until the occupation comes to an end. ... The process of consultation concluded that the Oslo era was at an end, and therefore the legislative elections... were likely to be free from manipulation or constraints. It was these constraints and the monopoly over the political process that discouraged us from taking part in the 1996 elections. ... We knew the Oslo Accords were doomed.... We decided to stay away because we did not wish to support the unjust settlement in any way. Our participation at that time would have bestowed legitimacy on what was in our opinion illegitimate.’¹⁰⁹ Hamas’s confidence was boosted by ‘the utter failure of the peace process, the disappearance of Yasir Arafat from the political scene, and Israel’s unilateral decision to end its occupation of the Gaza Strip. Other factors were the belief prevalent among the Palestinians that resistance by Hamas and other factions forced the Israelis out of Gaza, and the disarray within the Fatah movement.’¹¹⁰ A final reason was that Hamas members believed that being elected into government would force ‘the international community to abandon its boycott of Hamas. ... Eventually, they conjectured, Hamas could conceivably achieve its removal from the international lists of terrorist organizations, simply because nations would have no option but to deal with it directly.’¹¹¹

Benedetta Berti, a research fellow at Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies who specializes in the political integration of armed groups, points out that ‘the initial enthusiasm for armed struggle [in the Second Intifada] had started to wane as

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 210–211.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 211.

¹¹¹Ibid., 215.

early as fall 2002, while the general approval of political negotiations started to rise steadily during 2003, a trend that took place even among Hamas supporters.’¹¹² In addition, ‘the intense and prolonged military confrontation with Israel [and] numerous direct attacks, arrests, and targeted assassinations [affected] Hamas’s military capacity [and] the group found itself weakened, which [had] also pushed the organization into accepting a Fatah-brokered cease-fire in June 2003.’¹¹³ Finally, ‘the group’s financial structure was also under considerable pressure because of the international community’s post-9/11 increasingly more aggressive [sic] efforts to crack down on its funding sources’.¹¹⁴ There were also benefits to be had from political participation that were not available previously, as Berti explains. ‘[U]nlike in the early 1990s, Hamas was able to capitalize on its political strength and on the simultaneous crisis of the group’s main political opponent to gather a significant electoral constituency and reaffirm its relevance and legitimacy through institutional expansion.’¹¹⁵ Berti echoes Tamimi and al-Rishiq above when she asserts that one of the most important factors in Hamas’s decision to take part in elections from 2004 to 2006 was that the political system had now opened up, giving Hamas a real chance. Arafat’s death contributed significantly to this opening. ‘This single event swiftly altered the preexisting power equilibrium and increased the system’s permeability, thus providing a strong incentive for Hamas to pursue political participation through institutional politics.’¹¹⁶ ‘Hamas has constantly balanced its need to show its military strength to its enemy with the desire to maintain a strong internal legitimacy. ... While at times violence against Israel has been used to boost domestic support and recruit for the group, there have also been occasions when

¹¹²Berti, *Armed Political Organizations*, l. 2152.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, l. 2159.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, l. 2163.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, l. 2186.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, l. 2203.

terrorism against Hamas's main enemy has been a liability for the group.'¹¹⁷ This political opening eased 'push factors' leading Hamas towards violence (and away from deterrence) by providing alternative means of gaining influence while 'pull factors' ('holes' in deterrence and defence that encourage attacks) were being eliminated by the security barrier and active Israeli security measures. Forces on all sides of Hamas, in other words, were encouraging it to be deterred. This explains why Hamas began to reduce rocket and mortar attacks after a peak in 2004 (see figure 5.6 above), even as it was also reducing all other types of attack (see figure 5.7 below) and halting suicide bombings altogether.

Deaths and casualties in all other types of attacks by Hamas

January 2000 through December 2007

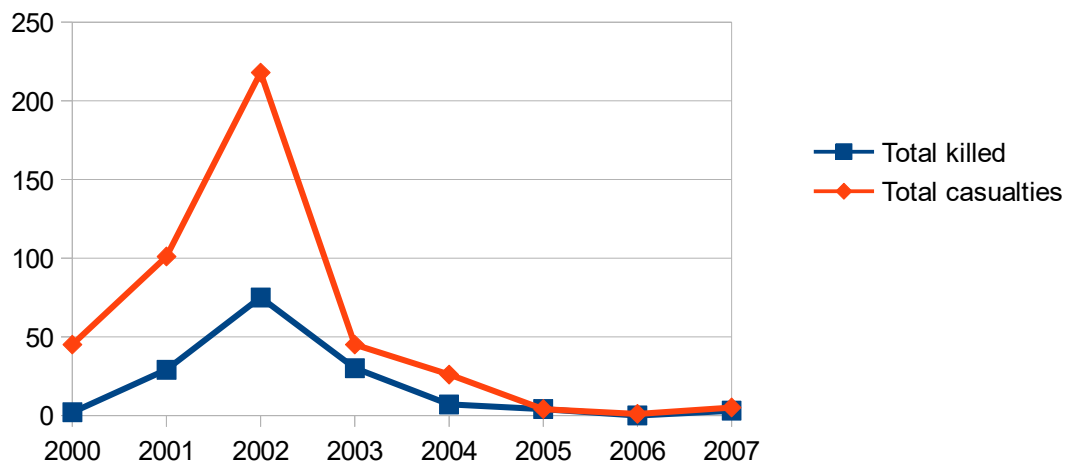


Figure 5.7¹¹⁸

In February 2005, meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas agreed to a cessation of hostilities in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Sharon declared 'we agreed that all Palestinians will stop all

¹¹⁷Ibid., l. 1866.

¹¹⁸Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks."

acts of violence against all Israelis everywhere, and—in parallel—Israel will cease all its military activity against all Palestinians anywhere’. Abbas agreed to end ‘all acts of violence against Palestinians and Israelis, wherever they are’. As a result, Jordan and Egypt also said they would send ambassadors back to Israel after a four-year absence.¹¹⁹ It now fell to Abbas to solidify an informal cease-fire the Palestinian factions had entered into at the beginning of the year. At talks in Cairo in March, Hamas and other Palestinian factions agreed to extend the temporary cease-fire (*tahadiya*). UK-based Hamas supporter Azzam Tamimi reports that Hamas knew that ‘Israel and the United States needed the continuation of the truce in order to enable Sharon to proceed with the withdrawal of troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip as the first phase of his disengagement plan.’ At the same time, the ‘Hamas leadership was conscious that the majority of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank favoured an extension of the period of calm. Undeniably, the Palestinians in the occupied territories had been exhausted by Israel’s collective punishment measures.’ The most important factor, however, was reforms to the PLO’s administrative structure that the PLO had also agreed on at Cairo. ‘If [the] PLO were to be restructured to reflect the affinities and affiliations of the Palestinian people... Hamas would most likely be the biggest beneficiary. [Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled] Mish’al saw the Cairo agreement as the beginning of a process that might enable Hamas to take an active part in ending Fatah’s monopoly on decision making within the PLO.’¹²⁰

The Hamas leadership was correct in its assessment of the mood of the Palestinian population. According to a March 2005 poll from the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, support for bombing attacks in Israel had fallen from 77%

119Herb Keinon, “Sharon, Abbas: This Time It’s for Real. Leaders at Sharm Vow an End to Hostilities; Egypt, Jordan Envoys Due Back ‘Within Days,’” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 9, 2005, sec. News.

120Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2007, 212–213.

the previous September to just 29% at the time of the poll. At the same time, 84% of Palestinians supported a return to negotiations, with a majority, 59%, preferring a permanent agreement. Accordingly, 59% of Palestinians supported the 'Road Map' peace plan put forward by the 'Quartet' (US, EU, Russia, and the UN) in June 2002.¹²¹

Though Hamas enjoyed considerable political successes, these created tensions with its rival, Fatah. Fatah came first in the round of 5 May 2005, winning 50 councils to Hamas's 28, but Hamas was the clear winner in urban councils while Fatah tended to lead in rural areas. 'Hamas won most of the seats in Rafah, Beit Lahia, and al-Burajj.' Fatah questioned the accuracy of the vote and declared that the elections would be held again. Hamas refused and threatened to demand that Palestinians boycott the vote. Fatah then agreed to postpone the re-run of voting, but Abbas announced that he was postponing the legislative elections indefinitely. After changes to the electoral system, including the introduction of a system of partial proportional representation, Abbas finally announced that the legislative elections would be held on 25 January 2006.¹²²

5.4 Hamas's election win, fighting between Hamas and Fatah, takeover of Gaza

Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections held on 25 January 2006. Three days later, the head of Hamas's external leadership, Khaled Meshal, held a press conference in Damascus, Syria, promising to work with Fatah and other Palestinian factions to form a government. Hamas also announced that it was

¹²¹Survey Research Unit, "Results of Poll #15," *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, March 12, 2005, <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2005/p15a.html>.

¹²²Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 213–214.

extending its truce with Israel (there had been few attacks since January 2005 and none at all since the kidnapping and murder of an Israeli in September).¹²³

Benedetta Berti notes that the greater emphasis on political action around this time ‘put the local political leaders at the organization’s front, while the group’s military wing largely stood at the margins’.¹²⁴ ‘The period immediately following Hamas’s electoral victory further increased the status of the local political leaders’, who often adopted ‘a more accommodation-prone attitude with respect to external and internal foes’.¹²⁵ An internal reorganization within Hamas also granted leaders involved in the government more freedom. ‘It is believed that elected officials tended to, at least officially, discontinue their internal roles as members of the Shura Council, thus granting a level of separation between the Hamas government’s view and the movement’s position.’¹²⁶

Despite its uncompromising charter, its unchanged stance on the eventual ‘liberation’ of all of Mandatory Palestine from Israeli control, and its history of armed resistance and terrorism, maintaining an extended period of peace with Israel does not necessarily run counter to Hamas’s ideology. As noted in Chapter 3, Sheikh Yassin and the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood’s idea into the 1980s was that Palestinians were not ready to overthrow Israel and that society first needed to return to Islam. Returning Palestinian society to Islam is the first step towards Palestinian liberation and Hamas needed to remain influential to accomplish that step. With no political possibilities in the late 1980s and with the popularity of the Intifada, Hamas was born to engage in armed resistance, partly to keep the Brotherhood and its message relevant. In 2005, by contrast,

¹²³Ibid., 224.

¹²⁴Berti, *Armed Political Organizations*, l. 2511.

¹²⁵Ibid., l. 2514.

¹²⁶Ibid., l. 2516.

Hamas was more popular than ever and public opinion no longer required it to engage in frequent violence to maintain its credibility. Hamas also now had a political route to cementing its popularity with the people and Islamizing Palestinian society through political and governmental processes. Stepping back from armed struggle and offering a *hudna* were thus consistent with Hamas's long-term strategy. This would buy Hamas time to return Palestinian society to Islam and strengthen brotherhood between Arab countries. It would also buy it time to increase its military strength. There was never anything ideological that prevented Hamas from halting violence against Israel as long as it deemed that halt temporary and it did not currently need violence to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of Palestinians. Yassin highlighted this each time he mentioned a long-term *hudna*. If Hamas achieved control and legitimacy through political participation and Palestinian opinion remained opposed to armed struggle, Hamas would not be subject to 'push factors' (elements making the status quo unacceptable) encouraging it to engage in violence. If Israeli security and deterrence measures remained robust, eliminating 'pull factors' while avoiding exacerbating 'push factors', there was thus a chance that Hamas could have been deterred for an extended period.

Those push factors soon returned, however, in the form of actions by Fatah, which dominated the outgoing PLC and was not willing to wait and see if Hamas kept its promises to work with Fatah and adhere to its ceasefire. On their last day in power, the PLC's outgoing Members of Parliament passed a law establishing a new Constitutional Court and a second granting the Palestinian Authority President the power to appoint the court's nine judges without PLC approval. That court would have the power to 'rule on any disputes about the division of powers between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government'.¹²⁷ In effect, President Abbas had

¹²⁷"Hamas Slams Measures Adopted by Outgoing MPs," *Agence France Presse*, February 13, 2006.

ensured that he would have final say in any decisions by the Palestinian Authority. Abbas later also 'claimed exclusive presidential authority over the police force, the various media outlets such as TV, radio, and the Wafa news agency, the Property Sale and Registration Department, and control over the crossing points between Israel and the Palestinian territories. [He also] appointed Rashid Abu Shbak in charge of internal security.'¹²⁸ The most important parts of the government thus fell under the President's control. This split was more than just political, it also paved the way for the more severe geographical split that was to come, as Abbas and his offices were located in the West Bank, while most of the Hamas leadership resided in Gaza.¹²⁹

In the meantime, some still speculated that Hamas would moderate its stance significantly. According to Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz, this included Egyptian President Mubarak: 'The president says that he believes that Hamas will change its ways in the future and adopt the Israeli conditions' of abandoning its violent ideology, recognizing Israel's right to exist, and honouring previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. Mubarak also apparently pledged to 'exert all of his efforts' to make Hamas do so.¹³⁰ London-based Hamas supporter Azzam Tamimi also revealed that he was working with Hamas to change its charter to make it less anti-Semitic and more moderate (though it would still call for an eventual end of the State of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state in all of Mandatory Palestine). Hamas leaders within the West Bank and Gaza claimed to know nothing about this change, however, and to this day, it has not come to pass. It was not out of the question, however. As the Hamas politician Sheikh Yasser Mansour commented, 'we could

¹²⁸Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 228–9.

¹²⁹Berti, *Armed Political Organizations*, I. 2550.

¹³⁰"Mubarak Thinks Hamas Will Succumb to International Pressure, Change Ways: Israel's Mofaz," *Associated Press Worldstream*, February 14, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

discuss changes. The charter is not the Koran.’¹³¹ Mansour was echoing a comment made by a Hamas leader from Nablus, Professor Mohammed Ghazal, who also said the charter could be changed, as it was ‘not the Koran’. Ghazal went even further, suggesting that this could allow the group one day to recognize Israel, though senior leader Mahmoud al-Zahar immediately denied such a possibility.¹³² Muaman Bseiso, a columnist for the Hamas weekly Al-Risala, also wrote ‘The charter is not the Koran ... I believe that one day it will be changed or replaced according to the views of the Hamas, in order to realize the national interests of the Palestinians.’¹³³ Various voices within Hamas were thus sending partly contradictory messages, in part due to Hamas’s structure, with internal and external leaders, as well as political and military wings, acting with varying degrees of autonomy. Even as members of the new Hamas-led government were adopting a more moderate tone, the external leadership, along with the military wing, maintained a more hard-line stance, with Meshal reiterating: ‘Our mission is to liberate Jerusalem and purify the al-Aqsa Mosque. ... This victory (in PA elections) is a message from the Palestinian nation that it is united behind the *jihad* option’. He also added: ‘The entire Israeli arsenal is not enough to provide peace to the Israelis.’¹³⁴

The international pressure Mubarak thought would force Hamas to change was indeed having an effect: ‘The most painful measure taken against Hamas has so far been the economic sanctions imposed by the international community. ... The real problem

131Orly Halpern, “EXCLUSIVE: Hamas Working on ‘New Charter,’” *Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 2006, <http://fr.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1139395429041>.

132“Hamas Leader Says Charter Is Not Koran; Group Could One Day Recognize Israel,” *Haaretz.com*, September 22, 2005, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/hamas-leader-says-charter-is-not-koran-group-could-one-day-recognize-israel-1.170461>.

133“Hamas in Run-up to Elections: Relatively Pragmatic Statements Alongside Extremist Statements,” Special Dispatch (Washington, DC: The Middle East Media Research Institute, January 27, 2006), http://www.memri.org/report/en/print1591.htm#_edn6.

134Ali Waked, “Hamas: Our Goal – Liberate Jerusalem,” *Ynetnews*, February 14, 2006, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3215968,00.html>.

was that there was virtually no means of delivering money to the government; all channels had been blocked. The United States and Israel used all the resources at their disposal in order to prevent any money from getting through.’ Tamimi concluded that the real intention of these policies was ‘to provoke Palestinian Authority employees and members of the various police forces... to turn against the new Palestinian Authority for failing to pay their salaries’.¹³⁵ As progress via the political route seemed increasingly blocked (a revival of a ‘push factor’ that helped to limit Hamas’s options to violence or acceptance of a diminished status), the way was paved for renewed tensions between Hamas and Fatah as well as an end to an eight-month period, from 26 September 2005 until 10 June 2006, during which Hamas had avoided violence against Israel.¹³⁶

As far back as the beginning of 2005, after Hamas enjoyed its first election victories, tension between it and Fatah was high, with one PA official at that time threatening a “‘Fallujah-style” operation against Hamas’.¹³⁷ The split between the Fatah-controlled executive and Hamas-controlled legislature and between the West Bank and Gaza stoked these tensions again. By early June 2006, there were daily reports of Palestinians being killed in clashes between Hamas and Fatah, and many more were wounded, including in a drive-by shooting that targeted a member of Hamas’s military wing.¹³⁸ Attacks on Fatah members led the group to respond by posting gunmen on the Gaza border, ostensibly to guard against Israeli aggression, but with a threat to ‘deploy this unit in the main streets of the Gaza Strip to protect Palestinian citizens [if] assassinations by unknown (gunmen) continue’.¹³⁹ The next day, gunmen associated

¹³⁵Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 230.

¹³⁶Kirchofer, “Database of Hamas Terror Attacks.”

¹³⁷Khaled Abu Toameh, “PA Official Threatens ‘Fallujah-Style’ Operation Against Hamas,” *The Jerusalem Post*, January 6, 2005, sec. NEWS.

¹³⁸“Senior Member of Hamas Military Wing Wounded in Drive-by Shooting,” *Associated Press International*, June 3, 2006, sec. International News.

¹³⁹“Fatah-Linked Group to Deploy Gunmen on Gaza Border,” *Agence France Presse -- English*, June 4, 2006.

with Hamas stormed a Palestinian TV studio in Gaza. Although a Hamas spokesman claimed the group had nothing to do with the attack, he did mention that the television station ‘frequently resorts to incitement against Hamas, which raises tensions’. Bank branches also had to be closed for security reasons after clashes broke out with unpaid civil servants.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, the truce between Hamas and Israel also collapsed after more than eight months of complete quiet and around 16 months of relative calm. The first incident was the targeted killing of Jamal Abu Samhadana, a member of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) and a Hamas appointee to the Interior Ministry with responsibility for overseeing Hamas’s militia forces in Gaza.¹⁴¹ This, combined with the alleged Israeli shelling of a Gaza beach, which killed eight civilians (the IDF would later assert that the explosion on the beach was not its doing), led Hamas to announce it was breaking the ceasefire by launching rockets into Israel.¹⁴² This led to further escalation, as Israel’s Defence Minister Peretz announced that he had approved plans to resume targeting Hamas political leaders. He did give Hamas a way out, however, noting that he had instructed the army to ‘wait several days before carrying out the plan in hopes that the situation would calm’.¹⁴³ Despite intermittent offers to renew the truce, however, the situation escalated irreparably when Hamas kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit on 25 June.¹⁴⁴

Different parts of Hamas’s organization responded differently, and in at times contradictory ways, to the various pressures at this time. The internal political leadership

140“Gunmen Storm Palestine TV Office,” *Agence France Presse*, June 5, 2006.

141“Israeli Air Strike Kills Two Palestinians,” *Agence France Presse*, June 8, 2006.

142Scott Wilson, “Israeli Airstrike Kills 10 Palestinians; Eight Civilians Among Dead; Israel Denies Role in Last Week’s Fatal Beach Explosion,” *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2006, sec. A Section; “Hamas Armed Wing Claims Rocket Attack Breaking Truce,” *Agence France Presse*, June 10, 2006, Nexis UK.

143“Report: Israel’s Defense Minister Approves Plans to Begin Targeting Hamas Political Leaders,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 11, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

144“Israel Vows Revenge after Brazen Gaza Attack,” *Agence France Presse*, June 25, 2006, Nexis UK.

has control only of domestic political tools and thus sought political ways past the tensions with Fatah. Shortly after Shalit was kidnapped, internal political leaders announced a deal with Fatah that would have implicitly recognized Israel, seemingly unaware of the actions of the Qassam Brigades and intent on moving forward with the political process.¹⁴⁵ Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Shaer said ‘We care about the life of the soldier and we call upon the kidnappers to guarantee his life and to release him’.¹⁴⁶ Benedetta Berti argues that the interpretation by much of the Western media during the period that these contradictory actions were a sign of internal disagreements within Hamas betrays a lack of understanding about how Hamas operates. She asserts that the organization was in fact quite cohesive at the time. She stresses that the fact that the political leadership was pursuing a seemingly moderate line while the Qassam Brigades took a more aggressive stance is not because the latter ‘went behind [the political leadership’s] back’ but is simply a reflection of how Hamas is organized, with the Qassam Brigades enjoying considerable autonomy.¹⁴⁷ Azzam Tamimi’s description of Hamas’s structure supports this interpretation. He writes that, while policy-level decisions are ‘taken at the highest level of the leadership of the Hamas movement... the tactics used to force Israel to release prisoners and withdraw from occupied land are local choices’ made by individual cells of the Qassam Brigades. He also notes that Ismail Haniyeh and other members of the government would naturally have been unaware of the plans because it ‘was agreed within Hamas before the legislative elections were held that members of the movement who were elected to the PLC or appointed to the cabinet should forfeit their leadership positions within the

145Ibrahim Barzak, “Hamas, Fatah Agree to Plan That Implicitly Recognizes Israel,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 27, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

146Aron Heller, “Palestinians Attack Border, Kill 2 Soldiers, Capture 1; Israel Threatens Harsh Reprisal,” *Associated Press International*, June 25, 2006, sec. International News.

147Benedetta Berti, “‘Gilad Shalit’ Email Correspondence with Author,” October 8, 2014.

movement'.¹⁴⁸ The split may not be between the political and military wings of Hamas, but within the political wing itself, however, particularly between the internal and external leaderships. An elder member of Hamas, Sayed Salem Abu Musameh, admitted around the time of the kidnapping in 2006 that there were internal tensions within Hamas. 'Haniyeh is from the pragmatic school, but there is great pressure on him from the hardliners.'¹⁴⁹

Gilad Shalit's abduction guaranteed escalation with Israel, thereby closing the door on a political pathway for Hamas. Two days after the abduction, Israeli troops entered southern Gaza and planes attacked two bridges and a power station that supplied electricity to much of the Gaza strip.¹⁵⁰ A planned expansion of the incursion into the northern Gaza Strip went forward on 5 July.¹⁵¹ Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made clear that this operation was an attempt to compel Hamas to free Shalit, saying 'We have no particular desire to topple the Hamas government'.¹⁵² Israel continued incursions into the Gaza Strip for much of the rest of 2006. During 'Operation Squeezed Fruit' in October, Defence Minister Peretz reiterated that the goal of the missions was compellence and/or disruption, stating that Israel had 'no intention of reoccupying the Gaza Strip'.¹⁵³ When he ordered the expansion of the operation on 31 October, Prime Minister Olmert once again stressed that Israel would not reoccupy Gaza: 'We will have

148Tamimi, *Hamas*, 2011, 242.

149Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010), 129.

150Steven Gutkin, "Israeli Planes Attack Power Station and Two Bridges, Knocking Out Power in Most of Gaza Strip," *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 27, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

151Thomas Wagner, "Israel Authorizes Army to Invade Northern Gaza," *Associated Press Worldstream*, July 5, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

152"Olmert Denies Plans to Topple Hamas-Led Palestinian Government," *Associated Press Worldstream*, July 10, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

153Josh Brannon and Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Peretz: IDF Operations in the South Must Continue to Stop Terrorism. Gazans Have Anti-Tank Missiles Halutz Confirms," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 25, 2006, sec. News, Nexis UK.

to take various steps without creating a permanent military presence there.¹⁵⁴ In effect, a ceasefire agreed on 26 November between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas shifted the problem of combating rockets from the Gaza Strip to Abbas.¹⁵⁵ The result was rising violence between Hamas and Fatah. A member of Abbas's guard was killed in a raid by Hamas gunmen on a training camp in Gaza.¹⁵⁶ Combined with clashes elsewhere in Gaza and in the West Bank between gunmen from Hamas and Fatah, a Fatah MP exclaimed that the situation 'looks like a civil war'.¹⁵⁷

Prime Minister Olmert, for his part, preferred Hamas and Fatah fighting each other to both of them fighting Israel. He thus vowed to continue with a 'policy of restraint', despite rocket fire from Gaza, which continued regardless of the ceasefire between Israel and factions loyal to Abbas, out of fear that a 'harsh Israeli response... would weaken Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and unite the warring Fatah and Hamas factions'.¹⁵⁸ Instead, Olmert met with Abbas and agreed to release \$100 million in tax money Israel had collected on behalf of the PA but refused to transfer to the PA after Hamas's election victory earlier in the year.¹⁵⁹ He also removed dozens of roadblocks in the West Bank and cancelled the planned construction of a new

154Josh Brannon and Sheera Claire Frankel, "PM: IDF Will Expand Gaza Operation to Stop Arms Smuggling. Boasts That 300 Hamas Terrorists Have Been Killed in Three Months," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 2006, sec. News, Nexis UK.

155Sakher Abu al-Oun, "Ceasefire Holds in Gaza Despite West Bank Deaths," *Agence France Presse*, November 27, 2006, Nexis UK.

156Avi Issacharoff, "Member of Abbas' Guard Dies as Gunmen Raid Gaza Training Camp," *Haaretz Daily Newspaper*, December 15, 2006, Online edition, sec. News, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/member-of-abbas-guard-dies-as-gunmen-raid-gaza-training-camp-1.207300>.

157Rory McCarthy, "'This Looks Like Civil War' - Palestinians Battle on the Streets: Clashes Between Hamas and Fatah Leave 30 Injured Rival Accused of Trying to Assassinate PM Haniyeh," *The Guardian*, December 16, 2006, Final edition, sec. Guardian international pages, Nexis UK.

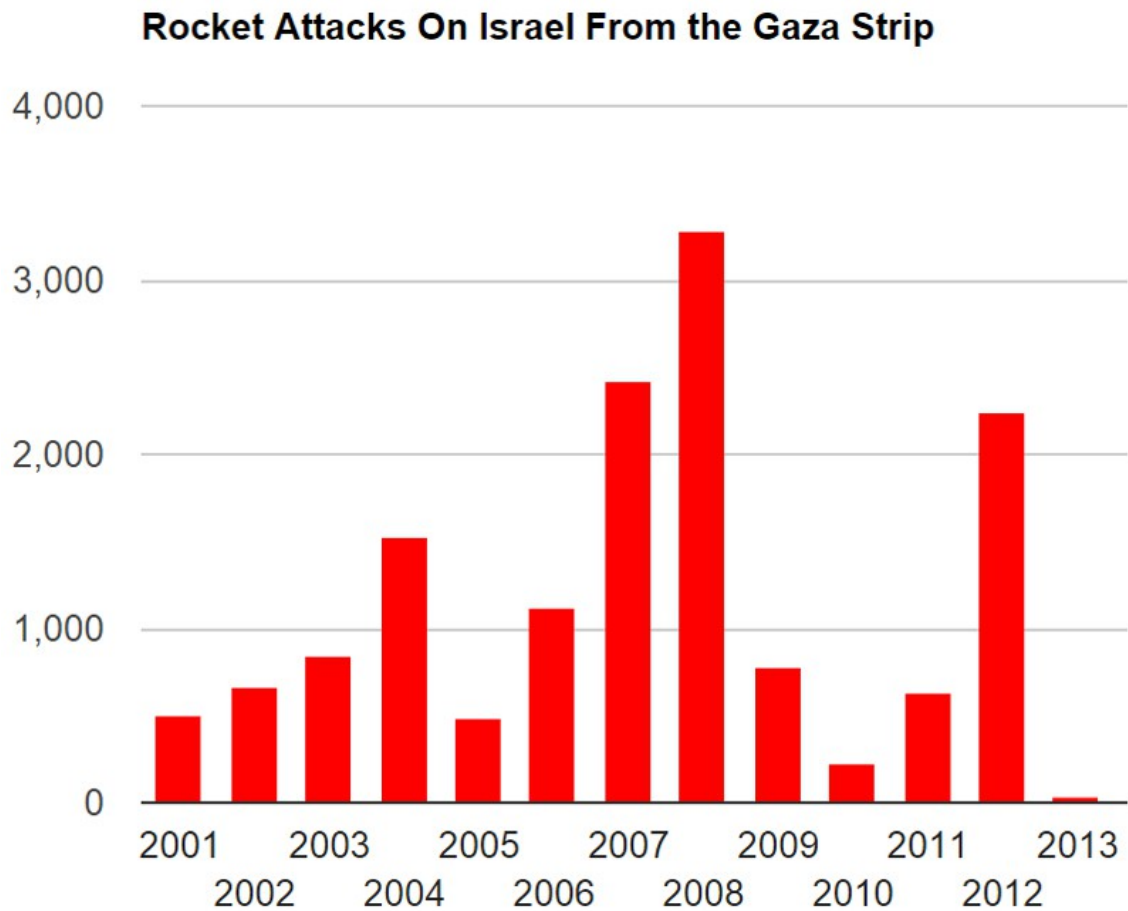
158Herb Keinon and Yaakov Katz, "Olmert Still Restrained Despite Kassams. PM Fears a Military Response Would Weaken Abbas * Peretz Urges Action," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 22, 2006, sec. News, Nexis UK.

159Herb Keinon, Khaled Abu Toameh, and Yaakov Katz, "Olmert Agrees to Release \$ 100m. in PA Tax Revenue. Decision Announced After Olmert Meets with Abbas," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 24, 2006, sec. News, Nexis UK.

West Bank settlement, in effect to reward Palestinians there for their support for Abbas.¹⁶⁰ This arrangement looked similar to that before the Second Intifada, whereby Israel and the PA cooperated to weaken Hamas. Hamas's attention was also most keenly focused on Fatah: Although rocket fire from Gaza was more frequent in 2006 than in 2005 (see figure 5.8 below), Hamas was not responsible for most of it. Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin reported 'that Hamas was careful not to fire Kassam rockets on Israel and that the organization was respecting the calm'. In addition, while Islamic Jihad was launching most of the rockets, it was not getting them from Hamas, in contrast to earlier rounds of launches. He also calculated that the odds of a Palestinian unity government would rise in parallel with violence between Hamas and Fatah.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰Mark Lavie, "Israel to Remove Dozens of West Bank Roadblocks in Attempt to Boost Abbas," *Associated Press Worldstream*, December 25, 2006, sec. International News, Nexis UK; Steve Weizman, "Israel Releases \$100 Million to Abbas Before His Unity Talks with Hamas," *Associated Press Worldstream*, January 19, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

¹⁶¹Herb Keinon and Khaled Abu Toameh, "Rice Boosts Livni's Plan for Palestinian 'Political Horizon'. US Secretary of State Stresses Need to Show 'How We Might Move Toward a Palestinian State,'" *The Jerusalem Post*, January 15, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.



Source: "Rocket Attacks on Israel From Gaza." IDF Blog | The Official Blog of the Israel Defense Forces. Accessed January 15, 2014. <http://www.idfblog.com/facts-figures/rocket-attacks-toward-israel/>.

Figure 5.8: Rockets launched at Israel from 2001 through the end of 2013.¹⁶²

Diskin was prescient, to a degree. A Hamas-Fatah unity government was indeed formed in February 2007. Prime Minister Olmert initially predicted the unity government would collapse, which is perhaps why he saw no need to cut ties with Abbas as a result of its formation, despite a cabinet-approved boycott on ties with the rest of the unity government.¹⁶³ Instead, he agreed to begin talks with Abbas, moderated by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on the 'contours' of a future Palestinian

¹⁶²"Rocket Attacks on Israel From Gaza • IDF Blog | The Official Blog of the Israel Defense Forces," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://www.idfblog.com/facts-figures/rocket-attacks-toward-israel/>.

¹⁶³"Olmert Sees Palestinian Unity Govt 'Collapse,'" *Agence France Presse*, February 12, 2007, Nexis UK; Herb Keinon, "PM Won't Cut Ties with Abbas Over Mecca Deal," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK; "Israeli Cabinet Approves Boycott of New Palestinian Government," *Associated Press Worldstream*, March 18, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

state.¹⁶⁴ At the same time, Israel allowed a transfer of arms from Egypt to a ‘military force loyal to’ Abbas, which Israeli defence officials claimed was necessary ‘to counter a massive military force Hamas [was] building in the Gaza Strip’.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin told the American ambassador that the US should not send further weapons to Fatah security forces, revealing in a leaked cable that their intelligence indicated that ‘most of the Fatah-aligned security forces have been penetrated by Hamas’ and that he feared weapons sent to Fatah would not reach their intended recipients. The situation in Gaza was dire for Fatah, as Hamas was dominant in ‘most areas’ there. ‘We have received requests to train their forces in Egypt and Yemen. We would like them to get the training they need, and to be more powerful, but they do not have anyone to lead them. ... They are approaching a zero-sum situation, and yet they ask us to attack Hamas. This is a new development. We have never seen this before. They are desperate.’¹⁶⁶

Military Intelligence Chief Amos Yadlin painted a more positive picture of the infighting. He predicted that Hamas would win control of Gaza because Fatah was weak there and ‘he would be surprised if Fatah fights and even more surprised if they win.’ Fatah was still strong in the West Bank, and had even begun to kidnap Hamas activists. Israel could thus work with a Fatah regime in the West Bank and, although this was not necessarily the consensus view within military intelligence, he remarked that a Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip ‘would please Israel since it would enable the IDF to treat

164Herb Keinon, “Israel Agrees to Discuss Contours of Palestinian State. Rice Launches PM-Abbas Talks Every Two Weeks; Sends Message to Arab League Meeting Today to Be ‘Creative,’” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 28, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.

165Yaakov Katz, “Officials Back PM on Arms Transfer to Abbas,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 17, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.

166Yuval Diskin and Richard Jones, “ISA Chief Diskin on Situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank,” Leaked Diplomatic Cable (Tel Aviv: US Embassy, June 13, 2007), <https://www.wikileaks.org/cable/2007/06/07TELAVIV1732.html>.

Gaza as a hostile country rather than having to deal with Hamas as a non-state actor'.¹⁶⁷

Yadlin thus expressed a preference for a deterrence situation that would indeed soon arise between Israel and Gaza. Three days after his meeting with US Ambassador Jones, Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip was complete. Israel now had a clear 'return address' for reprisals against Hamas attacks, greatly lengthening its list of potential targets.

During the Second Intifada, Israel had shown itself capable of moving from indirect deterrence to direct deterrence, by both punishment, in the form of targeted killings, and denial, in the form of the security barrier, improved intelligence, and the disruption of operations. This had succeeded in halting Hamas suicide bombing attacks almost completely, but had come at the cost of an initial massive increase in violence, the physical separation of Israelis and Palestinians through withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the construction of the security barrier, and the death of the peace process. These new methods had so far been less effective against rockets and mortars. Hamas's takeover of Gaza now meant a more straightforward direct deterrence relationship that, in the absence of bombings, would allow Israel to place more focus on rockets and mortars. This new relationship is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁶⁷Amos Yadlin and Richard Jones, "Military Intelligence Director Yadlin Comments on Gaza, Syria and Lebanon," Leaked Diplomatic Cable (Tel Aviv: US Embassy, June 13, 2007), <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/06/07TELAVIV1733.html>.

6. Hamas in Power: Compellence and Deterrence-by-Punishment, 2007 to 2014

Hamas's June 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip marked a shift to a third distinct period in Israel's deterrence of Hamas. It also left Israel's defence establishment with three options, as reported by the Jerusalem Post's defence analyst Yaakov Katz: intervene militarily to assist Fatah, seal Gaza off completely and ignore it, or attempt to talk to Hamas. Israel's leaders immediately ruled out the first option, not wanting to re-invade Gaza so soon after pulling out of it.¹ Some defence officials recognized that Hamas's takeover of Gaza meant a fundamental shift in the group's relationship with Israel—one that had clear benefits as well as dangers. As one official 'involved in monitoring events in Gaza and planning policy' explained shortly before Hamas's takeover was complete: 'The bank of targets has grown tremendously with Hamas's takeover. Hamas is a clear and defined enemy and that means that when we decide to respond it will be easier than before since all their buildings are now targets as is anyone walking around with a weapon.'² As Israel's military intelligence director Amos Yadlin confided to US Ambassador Richard Jones a few days prior to the takeover in a cable later leaked to WikiLeaks, a Hamas takeover of Gaza 'would please Israel since it would enable the IDF to treat Gaza as a hostile country rather than having to deal with Hamas as a non-state actor'.³ The head of Israel's internal security service ('Shin Bet'), Yuval

1 Yaakov Katz, "Israel's Main Options: Disconnect Totally from Gaza or Talk to Hamas. Security Chiefs Discount Notion of Invading Strip to Try and Help Fatah," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 15, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.

2 Ibid.

3 Amos Yadlin and Richard Jones, "Military Intelligence Director Yadlin Comments on Gaza, Syria and Lebanon," Leaked Diplomatic Cable (Tel Aviv: US Embassy, June 13, 2007), <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/06/07TELAVIV1733.html>.

Diskin, was less sanguine, reportedly stating ‘Palestinian society is disintegrating and that this bodes ill for Israel’. He asserted: ‘We have to give Fatah the conditions to succeed.’⁴ At the same time, it would also attempt to ensure Hamas did not have the conditions to succeed. It thus chose the second option: Seal Gaza off completely and ignore it. At the same time, it began to focus on improving conditions in the West Bank to create a starker contrast to the conditions in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

6.1 ‘Flowering Fatahland, wilting Hamstan’: An attempt at compellence⁵

The two intelligence heads sum up nicely the stick-and-carrot approach Israel was to take towards Gaza and the West Bank (and Hamas and Fatah, respectively) in the aftermath of Hamas’s takeover. Days thereafter, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and US President George W. Bush announced a plan to ‘shun Hamas and bolster Fatah’. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas founded an emergency government to rule the West Bank. The US had imposed an aid embargo on the Palestinian government after Hamas won the elections the year before. It now announced that it would soon lift that embargo against Abbas’s new government while continuing it for Hamas. Israel also considered deploying a force on the border between Gaza and Egypt to stop the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip.⁶ This policy remains broadly in place at the

4 Yuval Diskin and Richard Jones, “ISA Chief Diskin on Situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank,” Leaked Diplomatic Cable (Tel Aviv: US Embassy, June 13, 2007), <https://www.wikileaks.org/cable/2007/06/07TELAVIV1732.html>.

5 Description by Jonathan Freedland in Jonathan Freedland, “The Scene of Fatahland Flowering as Hamastan Wilts Is Sheer Fantasy: There Are Huge Dangers in Offering Palestinians a Choice of Statelets - It Will Only Push Hamas Further into Iran’s Orbit,” *The Guardian*, June 20, 2007, Final edition, sec. Guardian Comment and Debate Pages, Nexis UK.

6 Steven Gutkin, “Olmert and Bush to Map Out Strategy to Shun Hamas and Bolster Fatah,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 16, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

time of writing eight years later.

This approach was an attempt at compellence (a type of ‘negative reinforcement’—punishment unless and until the other party does what is desired) designed with the people of Gaza in mind, not Hamas. As Yadlin surmised, Gaza was ‘hopeless for now’ and the Palestinians had to realize that Hamas offered no solution. Israel ranked Gaza as only its fourth-largest security threat, behind Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah.⁷ Israel’s security officials were thus apparently confident that any threat from Hamas could now be contained. In addition to its attempt at compellence, Israel maintained a deterrence threat, noting that it could retaliate for attacks using the newly widened array of targets available to it in Gaza. The strategic aim was thus, in essence, to keep Gaza an unpleasant place to live and show the Fatah-ruled West Bank to be a better alternative until support for Hamas withered away and either a more moderate government took over in Gaza or Hamas agreed to the conditions Israel and its allies had set out for ending the embargo against it: renouncing violence, recognizing Israel’s right to exist, and accepting all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

To that end, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and US President George W. Bush met on 16 June 2007, just a day after Hamas took over control of Gaza, to discuss how to bolster Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at the expense of Hamas. Over the next few days, a flurry of measures were announced: In addition to the US lifting its embargo on the part of the Palestinian government controlled by Abbas, Israel announced that it would unfreeze tax money it had previously held, release 250 Palestinian prisoners, and renew negotiations on the ‘future contours’ of a Palestinian

7 Yadlin and Jones, “Military Intelligence Director Yadlin Comments on Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.”

state at a new summit hosted by Egypt.⁸ The interests of Israel and the PA were aligning; the two thus also re-established security coordination.⁹ Arab countries joined in this compellence exercise: In a surprising move, Egypt and Jordan headed an Arab League delegation to Israel for the first time ever to begin talks with Israeli officials on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which proposed Arab recognition of Israel in exchange for withdrawal from land occupied in 1967.¹⁰

In the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, Hamas had new responsibilities. ‘As a government Hamas had to arrange trash collection, pay municipal servants, handle the courts and police, and otherwise make 1,001 daily decisions. Sending each one up the chain of command and conferring with the external leadership would have been impossible. Now Hamas’s political center shifted to Gaza. Under the most trying circumstances imaginable, Hamas was finally being tested on whether it could govern as well as resist Israel.’¹¹ One of the central problems it faced was the economy, which was being hit by the blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. These issues were daunting and would seem to conspire to help Israel’s attempt at compelling Gazans to rid themselves of Hamas. Compellence, however, is more difficult to achieve than deterrence for at least two reasons. The first is that compliance with a compellent demand requires positive action, which is obvious and therefore humiliating (unlike compliance with a deterrent demand, which is negative and can always be explained away by the deterred

8 Anne Gearan, “U.S. Poised to Lift Palestinian Embargo,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 18, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK; “Olmert Says Israel to Free 250 Fatah Prisoners,” *Agence France Presse*, June 25, 2007, Nexis UK; Steve Kirby, “Israel Cabinet Unfreezes Palestinian Taxes Ahead of Summit,” *Agence France Presse*, June 24, 2007, Nexis UK; Mohammed Daraghme, “Abbas Aide: Egypt Arranging Regional Summit Next Week in Show of Support for Abbas,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 21, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

9 Matti Friedman, “Israelis, Palestinians Resume Security Talks, Signaling Renewed Cooperation,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, July 3, 2007, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

10 Mark Weiss, “First-Ever Arab League Team Due Here This Week. Talks to Focus on How to Bolter Abbas,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2007, sec. News, Nexis UK.

11 Daniel Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 182.

side by claiming it had no intention to carry out the given activity, anyway). The second reason is that complying with a deterrent demand maintains the status quo and thus does not invite further demands. This is not the case for compellence, compliance with which often involves a loss of potential power in addition to a loss of face, bringing the compliant party into a worse position should the compeller then simply make additional demands. Resistance to compellent demands is thus likely to be vehement and take on an importance bordering on pure survival. In the case of Israel versus Hamas, for instance, compliance on Hamas's part would see it either removed from power or accepting the ideas of the Oslo Accords—the first of which would severely reduce its power and influence, the second of which violate its very *raison d'être*, while both could be seen as threatening its very survival. It should therefore not have been hard to imagine that Hamas would seek to make do without complying or would even find ways to benefit from the situation.

One of these ways of making do and perhaps benefiting from sanctions was via the smuggling tunnels with Egypt. 'Within weeks of the takeover, [Hamas's] military wing had established oversight over much of the tunnel network that extends beneath the [border with Egypt].... An informed observer estimated the number of economically active tunnels had risen from fifteen in June 2007 to 120 by March 2008. The control at times is indirect; non-Hamas groups continue to smuggle, but Hamas imposes a tax on certain commodities. Hamas closed tunnels of operators failing to pay the new duties or caught trafficking illegal drugs or weapons to non-Hamas groups.'¹² The tunnels were beneficial enough to Hamas that some in Gaza claimed Hamas preferred to keep border crossings with Israel shut—further evidence that the blockade may actually have helped

¹² "Ruling Palestine I: Gaza Under Hamas," Middle East Report (Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 19, 2008), 18.

Hamas rather than hurt it. According to a 'local observer' interviewed in Gaza City in March 2008 by the International Crisis Group, 'Hamas calls all the time for Israel to open the crossings, and when they are open they shoot at them'. This led a Gaza City economist to argue in a December 2007 interview 'that Israeli crossings were shelled to keep them closed and thereby ensure the tunnels retained their importance'. The report cites the example of the Kerem Shalom goods crossing near Rafah. When it was opened, 'shelling intensified until merchants appealed to the Hamas government to hold fire'.¹³

Compellence thus showed signs of failure as early as late 2007. The deterrence portion of the policy, however, was somewhat more successful, though the level of violence of the current status quo was high enough that a confrontation was likely sooner or later. Hamas initially showed restraint, opting in addition to the shootings at crossings only to fire mortars at nearby military targets within Israel. It refrained from launching rockets or targeting Israeli civilians, but it did not prevent other groups from doing so.¹⁴ A period of escalation began in early January 2008, however, when Gazan militants launched a Katyusha rocket that landed in northern Ashkelon, a southern Israeli city considerably larger than the town of Sderot, which had been bearing the brunt of projectile attacks from Gaza. This was the farthest a Gazan rocket had travelled up to that point and, because Ashkelon is more populous, was provocative. Israeli government spokesman David Baker said: 'The Palestinians have attacked a major Israeli city ... and thus have upped the ante. Israel will not allow any cities to be attacked by Palestinian rocket fire.' Israel responded by sending troops into Gaza overnight, who killed two Hamas militants.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibrahim Barzak, "Israel Hits Back for Rocket Fire, Killing 11 in Gaza Attacks," *Associated Press Worldstream*, January 4, 2008, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

On 15 January, Israeli troops, tanks, and helicopters moved into the northern Gaza Strip in what they deemed a routine operation against militants. The Israeli troops completed the operation with no casualties on their side, but they killed three civilians and 14 militants, including the son of Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, Hussam Zahar. Hamas responded by launching a barrage of rockets at Sderot, the first time it had admitted to doing so in months, and fatally shot Carlos Chavez, an Ecuadorian volunteer working on a farm near the border with Gaza.¹⁶ Violence continued, leading Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak to order the closure of the Gaza Strip for several days.¹⁷ Such tit-for-tat actions continued until June.

After months of talks mediated by Egypt, Israel and Hamas came to a ceasefire agreement on 18 June 2008.¹⁸ The ceasefire required Hamas to end rocket fire and weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip in return for an easing of the Israeli blockade and a possible opening of the Rafah crossing with Egypt if there was progress on releasing abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Israel would implement its side of the agreement in phases in exchange for Hamas's fulfilment of its own terms.¹⁹ Egypt, for its part, promised Israel not to open the Rafah border crossing until Gilad Shalit was returned to Israel.²⁰ Hamas's reliance on tunnel smuggling calls into question the effectiveness of these policies as carrots, but the ceasefire was largely successful: The number of rockets and mortars hitting Israel fell dramatically after it went into effect. Between 1 January 2008 and 18 June 2008, 2262 rockets and mortars had fallen on

16 Ibrahim Barzak, "19 Gazans, Ecuadorean Kibbutz Volunteer Killed in Israeli-Palestinian Clashes," *Associated Press International*, January 16, 2008, sec. International News.

17 Adel Zaanoun, "Israel Locks down Gaza," *Agence France Presse*, January 18, 2008, Nexis UK.

18 Matti Friedman, "Israelis, Palestinians Greet Gaza Truce Accord with Some Relief and Much Doubt," *Associated Press International*, June 18, 2008, sec. International News.

19 Griff Witte and Ellen Knickmeyer, "Israel, Hamas Agree on Gaza Strip Truce, Accord Would Be Phased In, With Cease-Fire Beginning as Soon as Tomorrow," *The Washington Post*, June 18, 2008, Suburban edition, sec. Foreign, Nexis UK.

20 Steve Weizman, "Egypt Pledges in Olmert-Mubarak Talks Not to Reopen Gaza Crossing Till Israeli Soldier Is Free," *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 24, 2008, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

Israel, an average of 13.3 per day. After the ceasefire, between 19 June and 4 November, only 38 hit Israel, an average of just 0.3 per day.²¹ Compellence thus showed no signs as yet of working to rid Gaza of Hamas, but a deterrence relationship did seem to be emerging.

This period of calm ended abruptly on 11 November 2008, when Israeli troops entered Gaza to destroy a tunnel leading to Israel they said was ready for immediate use to kidnap Israeli soldiers. An alleged plot uncovered by Israel's Shin Bet security service just two weeks earlier to abduct Israeli soldiers and smuggle them into Gaza by luring them into a drug deal near the Egyptian border and drugging them with sleeping pills, combined with the fact that Gilad Shalit was still captive, suggests there was a real threat of abduction.²² When the Israeli troops arrived on the Gazan side of the border to destroy the tunnel on 11 November, a gun battle with Hamas militants ensued, injuring three Palestinians, including one woman, and killing one militant confirmed by local residents to be a member of Hamas. In response, Hamas launched mortars into Israel and admitted to doing so. Israel, in turn, attacked the mortar launching site, killing five militants. Abu Obeida, the spokesman of Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, promised revenge. Both sides saw the other as having broken the truce and each claimed they intended to continue to uphold it; each side felt it was simply responding to provocations by the other side.²³ This meant each side saw itself responding to a new, more violent status quo. The situation thus continued to escalate. Hamas soon began launching rockets at Israel and, within less than two weeks, Israel began sending tanks

21 "Rocket and Mortar Hits (launched from Gaza) 2001-2014" (Sderot, Israel: Sderot Media Center, September 4, 2014), <http://sderotmedia.org.il/library/Gaza-Rocket-Handout-pages3-4.pdf>.

22 Yaakov Katz, "Shin Bet Foils Hamas Plot to Kidnap IDF Soldiers at Border," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 27, 2008, sec. News, Nexis UK.

23 Diaa Hadid, "Israeli Troops Clash with Palestinian Militants," *Associated Press International*, November 4, 2008, sec. INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

into Gaza.²⁴ The number of rockets and mortars per day rose to 7.5, still much lower than before the ceasefire, but around 20 times higher than during the calm. In the week between the official expiry of the ceasefire and the launch of Israel's Operation Cast Lead alone, 161 rockets and mortars were fired, amounting to 23 per day.²⁵ Israel launched its operation on 27 December in response.

Hamas may have been able to prevent Operation Cast Lead by de-escalating, but it had in the meantime prepared itself for an Israeli invasion and may have believed such an invasion would benefit it politically. It 'tried to ensure that, like Hizballah, it could continue launching rocket attacks on Israel even if the IDF invaded Gaza; the ground forces would protect the rockets and inflict casualties, eventually wearing down the IDF and the Israeli people.'²⁶ It built three lines of defence. The first, located near the border with Israel, included "'kill zones" with observation posts, IEDs [(Improvised Explosive Devices)], mines, ambush sites, and preregistered mortar fire'. The second was located on the outskirts of the major Gazan cities and consisted of 'heavy mortars (120 millimeters), machine guns, antitank weapons, snipers, and suicide bombers [organized] in ambushes along anticipated axes of advance'. The final line of defence included 'a complex network of tunnels for moving fighters and weapons, positioning snipers, and kidnapping IDF soldiers, as well as an elaborate system of boobytrapped houses' within Gaza's cities.²⁷ In addition to the deterrent effect this might have, Hamas also believed that Israel's recent humiliating experience in Lebanon in 2006 would provide it an additional reason not to launch an invasion in the first place. Abu Obeida made this

24 Reuters, "Hamas Fires Rockets at Israel After Airstrike," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2008, Met 2 edition, sec. Foreign, Nexis UK; Ibrahim Barzak, "Israeli Tanks Rumble into Gaza," *Associated Press Worldstream*, November 18, 2008, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

25 "Rocket and Mortar Hits 2001-2014."

26 Byman, *A High Price*, 191.

27 Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White, "Hamas in Combat: The Military Performance of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement," Policy Focus (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009), http://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Hamas_in_Combat.pdf.

bullish statement published on the official website of the Qassam Brigades just days before Operation Cast Lead: ‘the reason is clear that Zionists military commander or political cannot afford results of a decision as big as the invasion of the Gaza Strip, especially the feel of defeat, failure and disappointment are still fresh to them after the war in Lebanon’²⁸ As Abu Bakr Nofal, a senior Hamas official on Gaza, put it, ‘Many of the Arab regimes and international leaders were living under the illusion that the Israeli army was unbeatable. This war has had a huge negative effect on the Israeli street.’ Israel’s susceptibility to Hezbollah’s rockets, and its apparent inability to stop them from being fired, has a particularly strong effect.²⁹

Hamas also likely felt emboldened by the mood among Gaza’s residents. Richard Falk, the UN’s Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Territories, described the situation in Gaza in 2008 as an ‘emergency situation that is producing a humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding day by day’.³⁰ Sharyn Lock, a campaigner with the Free Gaza movement who was present in Gaza in December 2008, wrote, ‘everyone asks everyone solicitously - “you have gas?”’ [Her friend] Moh pointed out that his gas canister is covered in mud, a legacy of its journey through the tunnels from Egypt which keep besieged Gaza supplied with such necessities – expensively [...] Moh paid the equivalent of £65 for [his canister of gas], which most families couldn’t possibly afford.’³¹ Mohammed Abdalfatah, Director of International Cooperation for the Municipality of Gaza, describes the mood in Gaza City at the end of 2008, before Cast

28 Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades - Information Office, “Abu Ubaida: We Are Not Trotting to Calm,” *Al-Qassam*, December 16, 2008, http://www.qassam.ps/news-903-Abu_Ubaida_We_are_not_trotting_to_calm.html.

29 Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010), 132.

30 Richard Falk, “Gaza: Silence Is Not an Option,” *United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, December 9, 2008, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=8380&LangID=E>.

31 Sharyn Lock, *Gaza: Beneath the Bombs* (London ; New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 25–26.

Lead. He says things were so bad that people wanted *any* change. ‘There was a slow suffering in August, September, October and you thought “let it come!”’³² Gazans thus viewed the status quo as unacceptable enough that they did not fear a confrontation with Israel—a ‘push factor’ that meant Israel’s deterrence of Hamas was unlikely to hold.

Hamas thus saw weakness in Israel and strength on its own side, both ‘pull’ factors in the deterrence model, and support from the Gazan population for a confrontation as a result of what Gazans felt was a desperate and unacceptable status quo, a ‘push’ factor that combined with the ‘pull’ factors to undermine deterrence. At the same time, the picture on the Israeli side was similar and had the same effect. Oxford Professor and historian of Israel Avi Shlaim contends that Israel was to blame for the tunnel incident that sparked the escalation that led to Cast Lead, as it was a unilateral action that violated the ceasefire. ‘[T]he ceasefire worked until Israel violated it by launching a raid into Gaza [in] November 2008 killing six Hamas fighters and then hostilities resumed. [...] The excuse was that Hamas was building a tunnel, which was half a kilometre from the border, but the Israelis said that they wanted to build a tunnel under the border to capture another Israeli soldier. But that’s not an excuse to break the ceasefire. Israel broke the ceasefire and Hamas retaliated with rocket attacks.’³³ He also confirms what Abu Obeida claimed above with regard to the Israeli view of the 2006 Lebanon War, but argues Israel saw this as a reason to attack, not a reason not to. ‘[T]he second Lebanon war was regarded by all Israelis as a failure and the military were annoyed that the failure eroded the deterrent power of the IDF, so they wanted to restore the deterrent power of the IDF by going into Gaza and showing what damage they could do. So one of the motives for the attack on Gaza, although there was a ceasefire, it could

32 Mohammed Abdalfatah, Author interview in person, March 13, 2014.

33 Avi Shlaim, Author interview in person, May 29, 2014.

have been presumed, was to enhance the deterrent power of the IDF by the brute and crushing use of military force.’³⁴

Kobi Michael, a former deputy director general and head of the Palestinian desk at Israel’s Ministry for Strategic Affairs, who is now a senior research fellow at Tel Aviv’s Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Ariel University, confirms part of Avi Shlaim’s assessment: ‘[T]he second Lebanon war... was perceived in Israel as a strategic failure from the military point of view and even the political point of view.’³⁵ Another Israeli affairs expert and former Foreign Ministry official explained to this author that a ground invasion was necessary in 2008 because Hamas believed Israel would not invade. Israel had to show Hamas that this was not the case.³⁶ Both Israel and Hamas were thus unsatisfied with the status quo and neither feared the consequences of an escalation so much that they wished to return to that status quo. Hamas had kept to the ceasefire as far as launching rockets and mortars was concerned and it did prevent many projectile launches by other groups, which can perhaps be considered the most important aspect of the ceasefire. At the same time, however, Israeli security reports that Hamas continued to smuggle weapons into Gaza and used the concrete allowed into Gaza as a result of the ceasefire to build underground bunkers.³⁷ Perhaps most importantly, there is no mention of tunnels in reports on the ceasefire agreement. In the event, both sides could view themselves as the defenders in this situation, making both less likely to back down. Hamas viewed itself as strong, doubted Israel’s willingness to invade Gaza, and found the status quo increasingly unacceptable. Israel did not view Hamas as strong, but did

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kobi Michael, Author Interview in person, June 10, 2014.

³⁶ Expert on Israeli policy, Author interview in person, January 31, 2013.

³⁷ Herb Keinon, “Calm in Gaza Allows Hamas to Strengthen Position, Cabinet Told. Diskin: Group Has Smuggled in 4 Tons of Explosives Since Cease-Fire,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 28, 2008, sec. News, Nexis UK.

see that its willingness to attack might be questioned. The status quo, in which Hamas smuggled weapons into Gaza and built tunnels into Israel, was poor enough that Israelis could hope that a better status quo might be achieved after a round of escalation.

With hindsight, it is easy to see that all signs pointed to a violent confrontation. Deterrence failed because the factors that would lead to it were not properly in place. In fact, the policies of deterrence and compellence came into direct competition with one another, as one would expect, because compellence seeks to alter the status quo while deterrence seeks to maintain it. In this case, compellence required making the status quo unbearable to encourage the 'right' sort of reaction in Gaza. For deterrence to work, however, Gazans would need to accept the status quo. The worsening situation in Gaza thus undermined deterrence and made an outbreak of violence more likely. This is not an uncommon situation in Israel's ongoing confrontation with Hamas, even as the equation shifted away from compellence and toward deterrence from after Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009.

6.2 Direct deterrence of Hamas: Cast Lead and its aftermath

With talk of an almost inevitable heavy military operation in the Gaza Strip increasing in Israel, a senior defence official laid out Israel's 'red lines' on rocket fire: 'We will only accept quiet like there was before the operation in November.... Sporadic fire of several Kassams a day is unacceptable and will lead us to a collision course with Hamas.'³⁸ This was not enough to compel Hamas to end the violence; it announced the

38 Yaakov Katz and Khaled Abu Toameh, "Hamas Chiefs Go into Hiding as Crumbling Cease-Fire Ends. 11 Rockets Fired. Only 'Complete Quiet' Will Prevent Collision, Says Israel. Armored Vehicles Deploy on Border. UN Suspends Food Distribution," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 19, 2008, sec. News, Nexis UK.

official suspension of the ceasefire on 18 December, though there were rumours that it would soon reverse its decision. A further announced measure by Israel had a greater effect than the above 'red lines'. Despite a comment made in June by Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh that threats to kill Hamas leaders 'don't even scare the smallest Palestinian child', the Israelis reported that Hamas chiefs went into hiding after announcing the end of the ceasefire. Hamas also reportedly 'evacuated many of its institutions and security installations in anticipation of an escalation with the IDF'.³⁹ This may be at least in part due to Egypt. After talks with the Israelis and Hamas, 'Egypt warned Hamas that if it didn't stop the rocket attacks, Israel would embark on an assassination campaign against all the terror chieftains in Gaza'. That same day, the number of Qassam rockets falling on Israel dropped from 10-20 per day over the weekend to 'just a handful', suggesting once again that threats against Hamas's leadership are taken seriously and can be enough to compel it to stop violence that has already begun.⁴⁰ This seeming success was extremely short-lived, however: The next day, Israel killed three militants in Gaza. Hamas retaliated by launching more than 70 projectiles at Israel the next day.⁴¹ Just a few days later, Israel began Operation Cast Lead, with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stating that the aim was ending 'insufferable' rocket attacks and 'indiscriminate terror'.⁴²

Israel's goal was not to topple Hamas and it was careful to avoid doing so accidentally. Mohammed Abdalfatah notes that Israel did not attack Hamas's main

39 Witte and Knickmeyer, "Israel, Hamas Agree on Gaza Strip Truce, Accord Would Be Phased In, With Cease-Fire Beginning as Soon as Tomorrow"; Katz and Toameh, "Hamas Chiefs Go into Hiding as Crumbling Cease-Fire Ends. 11 Rockets Fired. Only 'Complete Quiet' Will Prevent Collision, Says Israel. Armored Vehicles Deploy on Border. UN Suspends Food Distribution."

40 Yaakov Katz, "Barak Maneuvering Between Cairo and Livni," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 23, 2008, sec. News, Nexis UK.

41 Sakher Abu El-Oun, "Hamas Rockets Pound Israel as Truce Hopes Fade," *Agence France Presse*, December 24, 2008, Nexis UK.

42 David Horowitz, "Fighting Hamas in the Shadow of 2006's Mistakes. Have the Lessons of the War Against Hizbullah Been Learned?," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 28, 2008, sec. News, Nexis UK.

buildings. He comments that they knew where the Cabinet was, but they did not strike it for a week—after everyone was already underground. He asserts that no more than 100 Qassam Brigades members died. Israel attacked Hamas's weapons infrastructure, but *not* Hamas's own infrastructure. They could have taken out the entire internal leadership if they had wanted to; he noted that they came within 100 metres of Mahmoud al-Zahar's house. Instead, they attacked the police, '200 in one attack'.⁴³ As a writer for the Associated Press reported, the 'initial wave of airstrikes took Gaza by surprise, targeting militants and Hamas security forces at key installations.... But the government buildings targeted later were empty, as Gazans became fearful of venturing out into the streets,' noting that these buildings served as 'symbols of Hamas' power'.⁴⁴ Abdalfatah concludes: 'The people' paid the price and that was Israel's intention. They 'wanted to teach Hamas and the Gazans a lesson'.⁴⁵ Reports from this stage, even from sources more sympathetic to Palestinians, admitted that the vast majority of those killed were members of Hamas's security services and rocket launching squads, with only around one in six victims being civilians.⁴⁶ Israel claims it targeted the Hamas security services because a great number of them were members of the Qassam Brigades, with some of them even filling command functions within the organization.⁴⁷ The Hamas government does not deny this: 'Many of the Qassam operate within both the Qassam Brigades and the Internal Security. In our laws, we do not prevent any resistance fighter from joining the police or a security service, provided that he is committed to the rules and

43 Abdalfatah, interview; Hazem Balousha and Rory McCarthy, "Gaza Bombings: Civilian Death Toll Rises after Second Day of Air Strikes," *The Guardian*, December 29, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/dec/29/israelandthepalestinians-middleeast>.

44 Ibrahim Barzak and Amy Teibel, "Israeli Warplanes Slam Hamas Government Compound," *Associated Press Worldstream*, December 30, 2008, sec. International News, Nexis UK.

45 Abdalfatah, interview.

46 Balousha and McCarthy, "Gaza Bombings."

47 "Hamas Police 'Dual Function' in the Gaza Strip," *Israel Security Agency*, 2010, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/ENGLISH/ENTERRORDATA/REVIEWS/Pages/Hamas120709.aspx>.

regulations of the department he belongs to ... We make sure that their activities, outside of their official jobs, remain separate.’⁴⁸ Israel’s targeting of Hamas police and security forces was thus not merely symbolic. In addition, Abdalfatah may be overestimating Israeli intelligence. Because Hamas’s leadership went underground before Operation Cast Lead began, it is not clear that Israel could really have killed ‘the entire leadership’ if it had wanted to, though Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni implied at the start of Cast Lead that political leaders could soon be targeted, saying ‘Hamas is a terrorist organization and nobody is immune.’⁴⁹

Prime Minister Olmert’s initial aim of halting the rocket fire was not achieved during Operation Cast Lead. In fact, the number of rockets and mortars hitting Israel daily rose by nearly 50%, from 23.0 per day before the operation to 33.7 per day during it.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Prime Minister Olmert declared a unilateral ceasefire that would go into effect in the early hours of 18 January 2009, claiming ‘We have reached all the goals of the war, and beyond’. He also declared that Israeli troops would remain in Gaza for the moment, ready to return fire if fired upon.⁵¹ In effect, Israel was engaging in ‘tacit bargaining’: It stopped first to give Hamas a chance to reciprocate without actually negotiating with it. Although Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum stated ‘We will not accept the presence of a single soldier in Gaza’, Hamas did indeed reciprocate, holding its fire and allowing Israeli troops to leave the Strip.

According to an Israeli affairs expert and former Foreign Ministry official, the main reason Israel halted Cast Lead when it did is because it wished to ‘stop while [it]

48 Abigail Hauslohner, “Gaza’s Police Force: Between Hamas and a Hard Place,” *Time*, September 17, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2019151,00.html>.

49 MSNBC.com News Services, “Israeli Airstrikes in Gaza Kill More than 200,” *Msnbc.com*, December 28, 2008, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/28397813/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/israeli-airstrikes-gaza-kill-more/.

50 “Rocket and Mortar Hits 2001-2014.”

51 Ron Bousso, “Israeli PM Declares Halt to Gaza Offensive,” *Agence France Presse*, January 17, 2009, Nexis UK.

had the upper hand'. Israeli intelligence reported that Hamas was already beaten down quite heavily militarily and that its leaders were already quite deterred.⁵² The fact that Israel stopped first and that Hamas survived the onslaught, however, could in many ways be viewed as a win for Hamas. Kobi Michael underscores the distinction between a military win and a political victory. '[T]he idea that they can retaliate [against] the strong actor [...] and the idea that they can challenge [...] the IDF and not be defeated in the sense that they will remain as a military organization or a military player—or even a political player in the scene [...]—this is the win in their eyes! This is the strategic achievement.... Not only a military win, this is a political victory for them. [...]' And therefore deterrence is not only a military concept. Deterrence, [is] also a political concept.'⁵³ In addition, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intelligence and Atomic Energy Dan Meridor, claims that Israel was deterred after Cast Lead due to international condemnation. 'Wars today are shown on screen throughout the world in real time and you can't stop it. If you are very strong and you use your power and everyone sees it, you become a villain. The weak become the "right" side.'⁵⁴

Despite this view of the result of the conflict, the alleged assessment by Israel's military intelligence that Hamas's leaders were deterred as a result of the heavy pounding Gaza had received during Cast Lead turned out to be correct. Less than one rocket or mortar fell on southern Israel per day in 2009 after the end of Cast Lead (see figure 6.1 below). This continued in 2010, with just one rocket or mortar every two days, on average.⁵⁵ This low level of projectile fire also shows that it was not only Hamas that was refraining from firing; other groups were holding their fire as well.

⁵² Expert on Israeli policy.

⁵³ Michael, interview.

⁵⁴ Dan Meridor, Israeli policy towards Hamas, Author interview via telephone, February 22, 2014.

⁵⁵ "Rocket and Mortar Hits 2001-2014."

They had little choice in this: Hamas enforced the ceasefire. In March, Hamas arrested members of Islamic Jihad and forced them to sign an agreement not to launch rockets at Israel. A member of Islamic Jihad claimed that the arrested members were ‘tortured and interrogated about the identities of those who fire rockets’.⁵⁶ A Hamas official in Gaza said ‘Apparently some Palestinian parties are trying to create an excuse for Israel to resume its aggression against our people. Hamas will not allow this to happen.’⁵⁷ Hamas continued to enforce the ban on launching rockets and this was reported by multiple news outlets relaying interviews with both Hamas and the groups whose members were arrested.⁵⁸ These actions, along with Hamas’s statement of its intention not to ‘create an excuse for Israel to resume its aggression’, show that Hamas believed Israel would respond violently to rocket fire and that it was determined to avoid such an outcome. Hamas was deterred throughout the rest of 2009, all of 2010, and throughout much of 2011, a year in which projectile hits in southern Israel amounted to less than one per day except for two brief periods of escalation.⁵⁹

56 “Hamas Makes Islamic Jihad Vow Not to Fire Rockets,” *Agence France Presse*, March 9, 2009, Nexis UK.

57 Khaled Abu Toameh, “Hamas Crackdown on Islamic Jihad Rocket Squads Raises Tensions in Gaza. Hamas: Some Palestinian Parties Trying to Create an Excuse for Israel to Resume Its Aggression,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 11, 2009, sec. News, Nexis UK.

58 For examples, see: “Hamas Seizes Militant Who Fired at Israel: Gaza Group,” *Agence France Presse*, March 26, 2009, Nexis UK; “Hamas ‘Working to Curb Gaza Rocket Attacks,’” *BBC News*, April 2, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8601171.stm>.

59 “Rocket and Mortar Hits 2001-2014.”

Total rocket and mortar hits in Israel 2007-2014

(From all sources, but mostly Gaza)

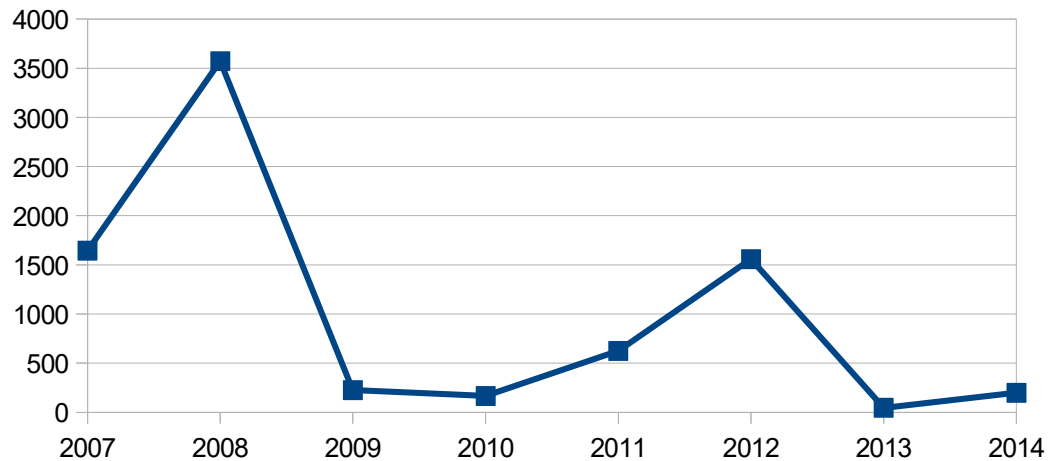


Figure 6.1: This chart shows the number of rockets and mortars hitting Israel each year (launched by all groups, not just Hamas). Note: the figure for 2008 was extended to 18 January 2009 so as to include all the launches during Cast Lead in one period and to contrast this properly with the rest of 2009. The data extend through November 2014.

News reports in late 2010 still quoted Hamas as saying that anyone launching rockets on Israel from Gaza was a ‘rebel’ and insisting that it wished to maintain the calm.⁶⁰ First signs also began to appear of a new confidence in Hamas’s fighting capabilities, however, which, if it continued to improve, could eventually constitute a ‘pull’ factor encouraging Hamas to risk another round of violence with Israel. Hamas senior leader Mahmoud Zahar said that, although Hamas seriously considered ‘Israel’s threats to launch another war on Gaza, [we] frankly say if Israel tries to enter Gaza, it will cost it a lot and it won’t be able to achieve its goals.’ In addition, he asserted that it was ‘the right of Hamas to have all kinds of weapons to defend itself. If Israel carries out another war in the future, it should think thousand [*sic*] of times before carrying out

⁶⁰ Haaretz Service, “Hamas: Anyone Firing Rockets from Gaza at Israel Is a Rebel,” *Haaretz*, October 30, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/hamas-anyone-firing-rockets-from-gaza-at-israel-is-a-rebel-1.321953>; Khaled Abu Toameh, “Hamas Says It Wishes to Abide by ‘Calm.’ IAF Attacks Targets in Gaza Overnight Friday after Rocket Shot into Israel. Izzadon Kassam Chief: You Will Cease to Exist and Palestine, with Its Jerusalem, Al-Aksa Mosque, Villages and Cities Will Remain Ours,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 26, 2010, sec. News, Nexis UK.

a war.’⁶¹ In February 2011, a rocket from Gaza hit the Israeli city of Beersheba, 25 miles from the Gaza border, for the first time since Operation Cast Lead. Israel responded by striking targets in the Gaza Strip, including the launchers thought to have been used by Islamic Jihad to fire the rockets at Beersheba, but also several Hamas targets in the Strip, showing Hamas that Israel held it responsible as well. A senior official admitted, however: ‘Hamas is trying to restrain the other groups.’ The official suggested that the tensions noted previously between Hamas and Islamic Jihad, including the alleged torture of Islamic Jihad rocket launchers, had not been resolved: ‘Islamic Jihad is trying to challenge Hamas and tries to attack even though Hamas is currently committed to the quiet’.⁶²

On 16 March, a rocket from Gaza landed in Israel causing no damage or casualties. Israel responded with an air strike on a Hamas training camp, killing two members of the Qassam Brigades.⁶³ This response is somewhat surprising, as the rocket did not cross any of Israel’s apparent red lines: It did not kill anyone or cause any damage, it was a single rocket, and it did not fall on a major city. Hamas, reflecting this surprise, responded by launching a barrage of rockets at Israel three days later, lightly wounding two civilians. Israel, in turn, responded by hitting a Hamas ‘security centre’, wounding five.⁶⁴ Four days later, however, Hamas chose to de-escalate. Spokesman Taher al-Nunu announced: ‘We confirm that our stance in the government is set on protecting the stability. We will work to restore the field conditions that were prevalent over the last few weeks.’⁶⁵

61 Haaretz Service, “Hamas: Anyone Firing Rockets from Gaza at Israel Is a Rebel.”

62 Yaakov Katz, Tovah Lazaroﬀ, and Judy Siegel, “PM to Hamas after Rocket Fire: Don’t Test Our Resolve. At Least One Dead in Rafah Following Fresh Air Force Strike at ‘Terror Target’ on Thursday Night,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 25, 2011, sec. News, Nexis UK.

63 “Two Militants Killed in Israeli Strike on Gaza,” *Agence France Presse*, March 16, 2011.

64 “Gaza Militants Shell Israel,” *Agence France Presse*, March 19, 2011, Nexis UK.

65 “Hamas ‘Vows to Restore Calm’ in Gaza: Statement,” *Agence France Presse*, March 23, 2011, Nexis UK.

This series of incidents clearly shows the restraint exercised by both sides and their reluctance to escalate in 2010 and early 2011. At the same time, it highlights the fragility of the deterrence situation and suggests that one or both sides were beginning to question the virtues of maintaining the status quo. This can be said to be part of Israel's medium-term strategy of cumulative deterrence, teaching its Arab opponents over time to accept lower levels of violence with Israel. As an Israeli academic with a security background explained to the author, once deterrence has established a certain low level of violence, it is then in Israel's interest to push violence down still further at the end of the next, more or less inevitable, round of escalation.⁶⁶ Because such a policy views escalation as a way of achieving a new, potentially less violent status quo, it makes maintaining a given deterrence situation less desirable. This undermines deterrence stability by reducing the commitment to maintaining calm.

A similar calculation exists for Hamas, which often sees its popularity, and thus hold on power, increase after an extensive Israeli operation and decrease whenever Gaza's residents see it as uninvolved in major events affecting Palestinians. Figure 6.2 below shows that, of Gazans who said they would vote in a legislative election, just above 30% tend to report they would vote for Hamas. Nevertheless, two dips in support immediately become clear: one in September 2010 and one in March 2012, times when Hamas was not involved in peace talks and a confrontation with Israel, respectively. Highs have occurred in December 2012 and since September 2014, both immediately following wars against Israel in Gaza.

⁶⁶ Israeli academic with a security background, Author interview in person, February 2013.

Support for Hamas among Gazans

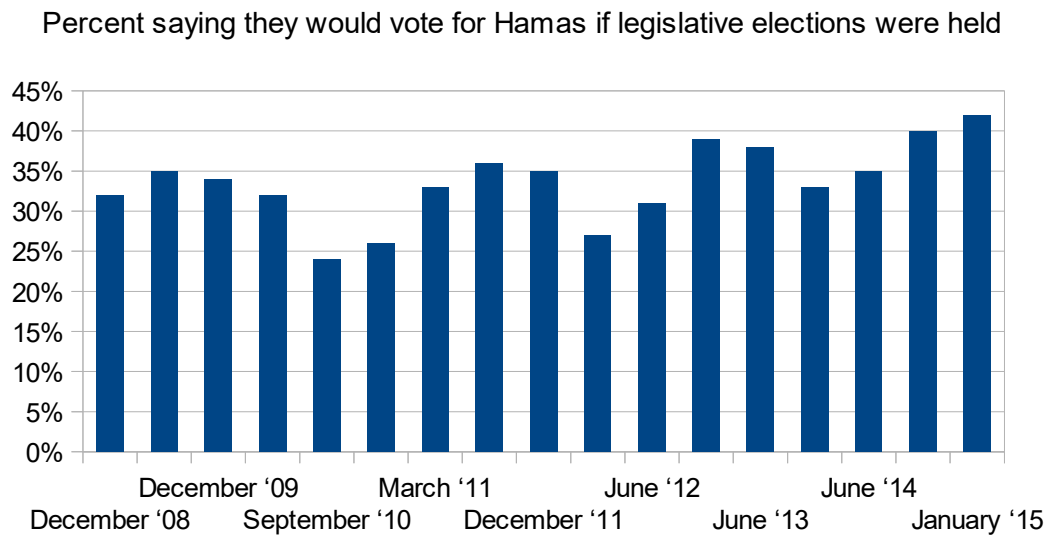


Figure 6.2: Percentage of Gazans who reported that they would vote in legislative elections who said they would vote for Hamas. Source: Palestinian Public Opinion Polls by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, Ramallah, 2008-2014.

In September 2010, just prior to polling, Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the resumption of peace talks.⁶⁷ On the day the talks began in Washington, DC, Hamas's armed wing announced that it was responsible for an attack in the West Bank that wounded two Israeli settlers.⁶⁸ Although many Palestinians approved of that attack, around '49% believe[d] that the main motive behind Hamas's attack on settlers was [to] impede the peace process and direct negotiations while 39% believe[d] that the motivation was to resist occupation and settlements'.⁶⁹ Furthermore, despite the fact that most Palestinians were opposed to resuming talks unless Israel halted settlement construction, support for Hamas, which

67 Herb Keiron, "PM: Israel Wants Durable Peace, Not 'Interlude' between Conflicts. As Talks Begin Today, Netanyahu Says, 'We Recognize That Another People Shares This Land with Us,'" *Jerusalem Post*, September 2, 2010.

68 "Hamas Armed Wing Claims Latest West Bank Attack," *Agence France Presse*, September 1, 2010, Nexis UK.

69 "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (37)," *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, October 2, 2010, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/216>.

was not involved in negotiations, fell.⁷⁰ Amongst the contradictory poll responses of the Palestinian public, suggesting widespread uncertainty about what the next step should be, this author can only conclude that Gazans support action, peaceful or violent, towards resolving the current situation of occupation, even if they remain sceptical of the odds of that action's success. Being seen to do nothing, or to halt attempts at progress, is viewed negatively.

This conclusion is strengthened by an analysis of the next low point in support for Hamas in March 2012. The number of periods of escalation doubled to four in 2012, up from two in 2011. The first of these periods, which began on 9 March when Israel killed a leader of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), showed once again that targeted killing upsets the status quo and leads to escalations when used in times of quiet. As a result, Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu said Hamas gave armed groups 'a free hand to respond to the crimes of the occupation.'⁷¹ In response, groups in the Gaza Strip, primarily Islamic Jihad and the PRC, launched more than 200 rockets, 116 of which were confirmed to have hit Israel, though the recently deployed Iron Dome missile defence system reportedly intercepted several others, preventing hits on populated areas.⁷² Naji Shurrab at Gaza's Al-Azhar University concluded that Hamas 'allowed the factions to respond so it wouldn't contradict its stated position on the resistance and would not appear to be abandoning the option of resistance'.⁷³ Hamas itself, however, refrained from participating in that round of violence, which was viewed negatively by Gazans, as the researchers at the centre that conducted the polling

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Hamas Walked Fine Line in Gaza Conflict: Analysts," *Agence France Presse*, March 14, 2012, Nexis UK.

⁷² "Rocket and Mortar Hits 2001-2014."

⁷³ "Hamas Walked Fine Line in Gaza Conflict: Analysts."

also concluded.⁷⁴

Hamas appears to have learned from this dip in public support. On 18 June, militants crossed the border from Egyptian Sinai into Israel and attacked several civilians working on the fence between the two countries. An Israeli military spokesperson said that the attackers were not from the Egyptian military but could not rule out that they originated from the Gaza Strip.⁷⁵ Although claiming they were unrelated to the border incident, Israel launched air strikes on the Gaza Strip merely hours later and continued into the next day, killing six Palestinians, including two Islamic Jihad militants and at least one member of Hamas's Qassam Brigades. Israel claims these strikes were against militants about to attack Israel. This time, Hamas joined in firing rockets at Israel in response.⁷⁶ An opinion poll was conducted of Gazans during the escalation that noted that support had returned to 31%, around its average since 2007.⁷⁷ Hamas agreed to a ceasefire on 20 June, after which Israel stopped retaliatory raids for two days but during which non-Hamas militants continued to launch a smaller number of rockets at Israel, one of which hit an Israeli border police post.⁷⁸ Israel eventually responded by resuming strikes in Gaza on 23 June, which led to a second Egypt-brokered ceasefire that restored calm.⁷⁹

Many commentators concluded that Hamas was launching rockets during this period of escalation due to the fall of the regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and the recent success of the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Morsi in Egypt's

74 "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (43)," *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, March 17, 2012, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/210>.

75 "Israeli Civilian, Two Gunmen Killed in Egypt Border Ambush," *Agence France Presse*, June 18, 2012.

76 "Gaza Rockets Pound Israel after Air Strikes Kill 6," *Agence France Presse*, June 19, 2012, Nexis UK.

77 "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (44)," *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, June 23, 2012, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/209>.

78 "Gaza Militants Fire Two Rockets into Israel: Army," *Agence France Presse*, June 22, 2012, Nexis UK.

79 "Hamas Says Ready for Fresh Gaza Truce Bid," *Agence France Presse*, June 23, 2012.

presidential elections, which occurred at the same time. As a 'senior Israeli official' told Agence France Presse: 'There is a connection between the flare-up of violence in Gaza and the Egyptian election. The Islamists are trying to change the status quo.' Gazan academics Ahmad al-Turk and Mukhaimer Abu Saada basically agreed with this assessment, with the latter concluding that the Egyptian election had bolstered Hamas and led it to 'test Israel to determine whether it has the intention of launching a war against Gaza'.⁸⁰ Hamas was not terribly provocative during this short escalation, however. It agreed to an initial ceasefire after just two days of attacks and, when it did attack, it avoided civilian targets.⁸¹ It should also be noted that at this stage, both Morsi and his opponent, Ahmed Shafiq, were claiming victory in Egypt.⁸² It would therefore have been premature for Hamas to make strategic judgements on this basis if indeed it did so. Gazan public opinion, combined with Israel's deterrent, thus likely provides a better explanation for Hamas's actions: It did not wish to be seen sitting on the sidelines during any escalation after it witnessed how unpopular this was among Gazans. At the same time, it was careful to keep its retaliation short and restrict it to military and government targets, thus reducing the likelihood of a large-scale Israeli retaliation. Hamas was not 'changing the rules of the game', it was mastering them.

The period of calm following this latest brief escalation was again short. On 7 October, Israel launched an air strike that critically wounded two men belonging to Salafist militant groups in Gaza. The strike also wounded eight others, including five children.⁸³ Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched rockets at Israel in response, citing the

80 "Hamas Retakes the Lead in Attacking Israel," *Agence France Presse*, June 22, 2012, Nexis UK.

81 Ibid.

82 Dina Ezzat, "Morsi, Shafiq Campaigns Both Claim Victory in Egypt Presidency Race," *News, Ahram Online*, (June 20, 2012), <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/36/122/45718/Presidential-elections-/Presidential-elections-news/Mursi,-Shafiq-campaigns-both-claim-victory-in-Egypt.aspx>.

83 "Two Critically Hurt in Israeli Air Strike on Gaza: Medics," *Agence France Presse*, October 7, 2012.

civilian casualties as the reason.⁸⁴ A very similar attack on two other Salafists on a motorcycle a mere six days later, which killed one of them, elicited only a muted response from Hamas, which ‘did not even mention [the killed Salafist’s] name in their official press release about his death’.⁸⁵ Presumably because no civilians were wounded and the Salafists posed a political threat to Hamas, the latter saw no reason to respond. This changed on the 23rd, when a roadside bomb laid by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) severely wounded an Israeli soldier near the border with the Gaza Strip just hours before the Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, visited the Strip. Israel responded with strikes against two members of Hamas’s Qassam Brigades who it claimed were about to launch rockets into Israel.⁸⁶ Since its own members had been hit, Hamas and Islamic Jihad responded by launching rockets into Israel, one of which severely injured two civilian Thai workers and lightly wounded several others, crossing one of Israel’s ‘red lines’: civilian casualties. Israel’s Defence Minister Ehud Barak reiterated this red line, saying ‘No terror element responsible for causing damage in Israel—or to Israelis—will be spared’.⁸⁷ Israel responded with air strikes in Gaza, which killed two Qassam Brigades members. Hamas responded by firing more rockets into Israel. This tit-for-tat violence seemed to have come to an end at midnight on the 25th, when an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire went into effect.⁸⁸ On 28 October, just three days later, Palestinian sources in Gaza reported that Israeli tanks entered the southern Strip and that Hamas militants opened fire on them. Israel

84 “Hamas, Islamic Jihad Fire Rockets into Israel,” *Agence France Presse*, October 8, 2012, Nexis UK.

85 Jon Donnison, “Israel Seeks to Contain Gaza’s Salafi-Jihadist Threat,” *BBC*, October 15, 2012, Online edition, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19952325>.

86 “Gaza Border Bomb Wounds Israeli Soldier: Military,” *Agence France Presse*, October 23, 2012; “Israeli Officer Severely Hurt on Gaza Border: Military,” *Agence France Presse*, October 23, 2012.

87 “Israel Vows to Punish Hamas as Gaza Unrest Spikes,” *Agence France Presse*, October 24, 2012, Nexis UK.

88 “Israel Vows to Punish Hamas After Wave of Rockets from Gaza,” *Agence France Presse*, October 25, 2012, Nexis UK.

responded with an air strike that killed one of the militants. Hamas, in turn, responded by launching rockets at 'military sites' within Israel.⁸⁹ By 31 October, however, the cross-border violence had stopped again without any further talk of a ceasefire. Perhaps the fact that a 'top-level Bahraini delegation' was coming to Gaza on 1 November to open two UN-run schools encouraged both sides to return to the previous ceasefire.⁹⁰

Within days of the Bahraini delegation's departure, however, the lull came to an end. On 5 November, Israeli soldiers shot a Gazan man who approached the security barrier with Israel and did not respond to calls to stop. Palestinian sources said he had suffered from mental illness. The next day, in what may have been an unrelated event, an Israeli soldier on patrol near the Gaza border was moderately injured in a bomb blast, with two others sustaining light injuries.⁹¹ The Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for that attack the next day, a day that also saw a Palestinian teen killed by gunfire from an Israeli helicopter providing cover for Israeli soldiers who crossed into Gaza to diffuse explosive devices. An Israeli soldier was also wounded in an explosion in a booby-trapped tunnel they had recently discovered and were seeking to destroy.⁹² On the 10th, the PFLP made the headlines again with a rocket attack on an IDF jeep near the Gaza border, which injured four soldiers. Israel responded by shelling several sites in Gaza, killing four and wounding some 30 others.⁹³ The next day, around 100 rockets hit southern Israel, injuring three people in Sderot and leading Defence Minister Ehud Barak to threaten to 'intensify our response'.⁹⁴ The number of rockets falling on Israel

89 "Israel Hit by 18 Rockets as Hamas Seeks Revenge," *Agence France Presse*, October 29, 2012, 18.

90 "Top-Level Bahraini Delegation to Visit Gaza Thursday," *Agence France Presse*, October 30, 2012.

91 Yaakov Lappin, "Blast Injures 3 IDF Soldiers during Patrol on Gaza Border," *Jerusalem Post*, November 7, 2012, sec. News.

92 "Gaza Teen Killed by Israeli Fire, Bomb Injures Soldier," *Agence France Presse*, November 8, 2012.

93 "4 Gazans Killed, 4 Soldiers Hurt as Rocket Hits Army Jeep," *Agence France Presse*, November 10, 2012.

94 Yaakov Lappin and Tovah Lazaroff, "Gazans Pound South with More than 100 Rockets. Three Sderot Residents Injured by Barrage. PM: 'We Are Prepared to Intensify Our Response'. Barak Blames Hamas for Attacks," *Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 2012, sec. NEWS.

fell to just two on the 12th, however, as Egyptian efforts at mediation seemed to be taking effect: Hamas stated that it would abide by a ceasefire if Israel reciprocated.⁹⁵

Israel continued to carry out non-lethal strikes on Gaza, however. Defence Minister Ehud Barak suggested that the recent status quo, with occasional rocket fire and bomb blasts hitting Israeli soldiers patrolling the border, was not acceptable and that Israel would escalate to establish a new, more peaceful status quo: 'We intend to reinforce the deterrence—and strengthen it—so that we are able to operate along the length of the border fence in a way that will ensure the security of all our soldiers who are serving around the Gaza Strip.' A statement by Prime Minister Netanyahu also suggests Israel was no longer interested in attempting to salvage the previous status quo: 'At this time... it is preferable to act (in a timely fashion) rather than just talk.'⁹⁶ The final blow to any chance of calm came when Israel launched an air strike that killed the commander of Hamas's Qassam Brigades in Gaza, Ahmed Jabari.⁹⁷ Hamas immediately responded by launching a barrage of rockets at Israel. Mark Heller of the INSS told reporters 'The deterrence against Hamas had deteriorated and Israel needed to reestablish it. Israel's failure to respond to rocket fire from Gaza led Hamas to think it could act with impunity.'⁹⁸ Israel now began its second major operation in Gaza since Hamas's takeover in 2007: Operation Pillar of Defence (a.k.a. 'Pillar of Cloud').

The irony of this escalation is that it came at a time when it appears many in Israel were beginning to question the logic of the prevailing 'wilting Hamastan' policy.

95 Jonathan Ferziger, "Barak Says Israel to Hit Hamas Until Deterrence Restored,"

BloombergBusinessweek, November 13, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-11-13/barak-says-israel-will-hit-hamas-until-deterrence-is-restored>; "New Israeli Warnings on Gaza after Rocket Fire," *Agence France Presse*, November 13, 2012.

96 "New Israeli Warnings on Gaza after Rocket Fire."

97 Diane Sawyer, "Deadly Strike; Air Strike," *World News with Diane Sawyer* (New York: ABC News, November 14, 2012).

98 Linda Gradstein, "Israeli Cities Under Fire After Dozens of Rockets Fired from Gaza,"

JewishJournal.com, November 14, 2012,

http://www.jewishjournal.com/israel/article/israeli_cities_under_fire_after_dozens_of_rockets_fired_from_gaza.

Giora Eiland, a former general, head of the INSS, and head of Israel's National Security Council during its withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, wrote in the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot that 'Israel has an interest that Gaza resemble, as much as possible, a state with a stable government. That is the only way to have an address for both deterrence and dealing with security issues. Israel has an interest in economic improvement in Gaza of the kind Qatar can bring. Such improvement creates assets that any government would be concerned about damaging, and thus it will be more moderate and cautious.'

Benedetta Berti, a research fellow at the INSS who specializes in the political integration of militant groups including Hezbollah and Hamas, agrees that the 'wilting' of Gaza was not producing the desired results: '[I]nitially the whole idea of isolation was [...] grounded in a few different theories. One was that if you push the people in Gaza hard enough, they will turn against Hamas, which of course has not happened. In a way, actually, this has become a fig leaf for Hamas: When they're not delivering to the people, they can always go back to them and say "look, this is the occupation, it's not that we're not managing our resources effectively." And to some degree, they're right. [...] Objectively it is true that governing under this situation has created a number of important challenges for them ... It's true that for them to deliver what they promised is basically impossible given the circumstances.'⁹⁹ Hamas has also remained popular because 'they are, as far as I understand, perceived to be less corrupt and have more integrity than Fatah, which is not so hard', though Berti noted that, 'As they become more and more embedded in government, you start hearing more about malpractice'.¹⁰⁰

Many experts this author spoke to around the time of Pillar of Defence felt that Hamas's isolation was eroding anyway, as more outside leaders visited, and planned to

⁹⁹ Benedetta Berti, Author interview in person, February 20, 2013.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

visit, Gaza. The fact that Hamas's parent organization the Muslim Brotherhood was in power in neighbouring Egypt also made the continued isolation of Gaza seem not only less tenable, but less practical. Shmuel Bar, a security expert and former senior Israeli intelligence official, believed that 'The Egyptian government is now headed by people who are associated with Hamas, but they won't do anything to endanger their relationship with Israel or the United States'. Nevertheless, smuggling tunnels were still open, as they always had been, Hamas looked stronger than ever with regard to its store of weapons, in particular, and its isolation seemed to be crumbling.¹⁰¹ At the same time, the presence of other, yet more extreme, challenges to Hamas's authority in Gaza from Salafist groups made the prospect of an eventual Hamas government collapse unpalatable. Shifting Israeli policy away from one of both deterrence *and* compellence ought to have improved deterrence in the way that Eiland suggested: There would be more targets to hold at risk during an escalation and the status quo would be more pleasant than an escalation. Ironically, the public debate about the shifting fortunes of Hamas and a possible shift in Israeli strategy towards pure deterrence may instead have emboldened Hamas in the short term. This time, 'pull factors', vulnerabilities in its opponent, coupled with a view of its own relative strengths, came together to reduce Hamas's reluctance to engage in a new round of violence.

At the same time, Mahmoud Abbas was determined not to stand still. He appeared to relinquish Palestinians' right to return to their ancestral homes within Israel when he stated that he had the right to visit Safed in present-day Israel, where he was born, but that he did not have the right to live there. He also stated that, for him, Palestine was the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Hamas spoke out vehemently

¹⁰¹Gradstein, "Israeli Cities Under Fire After Dozens of Rockets Fired from Gaza."

against this.¹⁰² At the same time, Abbas was working on a UN General Assembly bid to become an observer state and was involved in negotiations with Arab and EU governments on the matter. Hamas had learned previously that being seen to be uninvolved in matters affecting Palestinians hurt its support. Groups like the PFLP were also eager to register their resistance to Abbas, saying ‘We will hold Abbas accountable for his rejected statement’ on the Palestinian right of return.¹⁰³ Hamas has always known that it can halt any Israeli-Palestinian negotiations by turning to violence. Such moves would also ensure it remained relevant in Palestinian eyes and did not lose popularity. These were ‘push factors’ that encouraged Hamas to depart from the status quo and run greater risks of escalation.

A look at Hamas’s performance during Pillar of Defence itself suggests that it was right to view itself as stronger than before, making the risks it ran in the run-up less surprising. Mohammed Abdalfatah comments that ‘Hamas wasn’t ready for such a war’ in 2008. He contends that it learned from the 2008-9 war and was ready in 2012.¹⁰⁴ An employee for the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) agrees that Hamas performed much better in 2012 than in 2008-9. ‘In 2012, I had the impression that many in Israel did not expect Hamas’s tactical and operational performance to be so good. I was living in Ramallah at the time and I remember sirens in areas around Jerusalem, and I don’t remember that ever happening. Two things surprised people: The ability of Hamas to continue launching rockets in a coordinated way for a longer period. The second thing was the tactical cohesion and the fact that... the Israelis concentrated their attacks on the same areas, but the launching sites were

102“Abbas ‘Refugee’ Comments Wow Israel, Enrage Gaza,” *Agence France Presse*, November 3, 2012; “BBC Monitoring Headlines, Quotes from Palestinian Press 6 Nov 12,” *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, November 6, 2012, sec. BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political.

103“BBC Monitoring Headlines, Quotes from Palestinian Press 6 Nov 12.”

104Abdalfatah, interview.

underground. Many from the Gazan side claimed Hamas did not use a lot of resources, either personnel or firepower. You could see that [Defence Minister Ehud] Barak was not happy when the political aspect kicked in with the US, Egypt, and Europe.’¹⁰⁵

A look at the Israeli side also suggests reasons Hamas could feel more confident. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intelligence and Atomic Energy Dan Meridor suggests Israel learned its own lessons from the 2008-9 war. Being seen as too strong and harsh by the international community during Cast Lead hemmed Israel in. He says Israel learned from this in Pillar of Defence, which was very heavy, but very precise. Israel said from the outset ‘we don’t want to conquer Gaza’ so as not to create frustration when it was not done. This precision did not cause condemnation and improved Israel’s ability to act. He admitted that Israel was, in a way, deterred by the international community after Operation Cast Lead in that it could not be seen to be as violent as it had been that time.¹⁰⁶ Others confirm this. When asked why Israel did not go as far during Pillar of Defence, a former Foreign Ministry official with a security background responded that there are levels in the assaults on the Gaza Strip. Israel was running out of targets on what the interviewee called levels one and two. It would have had to move to the next level soon and that would have been much more extreme. The interviewee drew a map of Gaza with four concentric zones. No one lives in the outer one and militants launch rockets from there. The interviewee indicated that Israel could easily have occupied that area. The next ring was villages, then cities, then refugee camps. Each progressive step would obviously be more controversial. At the same time, a ground incursion was not necessary in Pillar of Defence, unlike during Cast Lead, when it was important because Hamas did not believe Israel would do it. In 2008, Israel

¹⁰⁵Employee of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Author interview via Skype, March 30, 2014.

¹⁰⁶Dan Meridor, Author interview on Israeli policy towards Hamas, telephone, February 22, 2014.

had to do it to show Hamas that this was not the case. In Pillar of Defence, the Israeli leadership wanted to end with the upper hand and Defence Minister Ehud Barak believed it would be better to stop while coming to an agreement with Hamas that had international support and guarantees. His view thus prevailed. In addition, the interviewee pointed out that it was surely relevant that this took place three weeks before an election in Israel.¹⁰⁷

6.3 After Pillar of Defence: Israeli policy as a rare constant

After Pillar of Defence, many once again professed that Hamas had emerged the victor. The same Israeli policy expert insists that Hamas basically got everything it wanted, as it desired three things: A halt to the targeted killing of political leaders, the opening of the Rafah crossing, and that Arab leaders be allowed to visit Gaza (which the interviewee stated was not officially part of the agreement, but was actually something Israel agreed to and this is the reason so many leaders from other Muslim countries have now visited Gaza and that Khaled Meshaal has also been there).¹⁰⁸ Mukhaimer Abu Saada, a political scientist at Gaza's Azhar University, claims 'Palestinians were happy to see rockets landing on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for the first time. It may be crazy but there's admiration that Hamas was able to manufacture long-range missiles and deter Israel. Palestinians believe the Israelis were begging for a ceasefire. The conclusion Palestinians reach is that the way to get results is resistance, is to make the occupation costly to Israel'.¹⁰⁹ As Kobi Michael suggested in an interview, however, 'sometimes we

¹⁰⁷Expert on Israeli policy.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Chris McGreal, "Middle East: View from Gaza: 'The Israelis Were Begging for a Ceasefire,'" *The Guardian*, November 23, 2012, Final Edition edition, sec. Guardian International Pages.

need a sort of perspective' to understand the real effect of any operation.¹¹⁰ As figure 6.1 above clearly shows, Pillar of Defence resulted in a period of calm, with total rockets falling to a record low of just 45 in 2013 and remaining low for the first half of 2014.

Perspective also reveals, however, that this period of calm was much shorter than the one that prevailed before it. Hamas weathered dramatic changes to the political landscape surrounding it in this period, which saw its supporters in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood of Mohammed Morsi, ousted in a coup, and another important backer, Qatar, isolated by other powers in the region. Mahmoud Abbas also featured more strongly on the Israeli-Palestinian scene as he worked with US Secretary of State John Kerry on a peace agreement with Israel and, when that failed, worked to further Palestinian recognition at UN institutions. The period eventually saw Hamas weakened enough that it entered a unity deal with the PA. The period from mid-2013 to mid-2014 saw a steady deterioration in the status quo in Gaza and for Hamas both in Gaza and abroad. As the status quo became less acceptable, an escalation began once again to appear comparatively more inviting. A weakened Hamas was thus no guarantor of peace. As it reached an apparent low point in 2014, violence spiked again.

Within days of the truce agreement that ended Pillar of Defence, Khaled Meshaal, Hamas's external leader, began working towards unity between Hamas and Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement. The calculation at that point was very different from that observed in 2014. In late 2012 and early 2013, Meshaal saw an opportunity possibly to achieve Palestinian unity with Hamas in a position to dictate the terms of any agreement, no doubt hoping to shift Fatah more strongly towards 'resistance'.¹¹¹ Shmuel Bar believes the support of Hamas's external leadership for Hamas-Fatah

¹¹⁰Michael, interview.

¹¹¹"Meshaal Repositions Hamas before Palestinian Unity Talks," *Agence France Presse*, December 11, 2012.

reconciliation in 2013 came largely because Egypt's Muslim Brothers were very interested in Palestinian unity. Meshaal was shifting towards them out of affinity, but also because it was becoming increasingly difficult to be seen to be close to Shia Iran, with its support for the Shia regime in Syria as it was killing Sunni Muslims there.¹¹² Hamas and Israel also soon began indirect negotiations in Cairo on easing the Gaza blockade, as promised in the truce agreement.¹¹³ It also once again enforced the ceasefire by arresting rocket launchers from other militant groups.¹¹⁴ Israel retaliated for one such launch, which occurred during a visit by US President Barack Obama, by halving the distance from shore that Gazan fisherman were allowed to sail. Hamas responded to this with diplomacy rather than violence, by appealing to Egypt.¹¹⁵ Whatever its intransigence during Pillar of Defence, Hamas was now clearly committed to the ceasefire.

At the time, it seemed that Israel might be moving away from its 'wilting Hamastan' policy despite the recent war. Benedetta Berti contended: 'The terms of the cease-fire basically said, between the lines, that the idea is to move beyond [the isolation policy], not in these terms, not verbatim, of course, but after the cease-fire, there have already been a couple of talks going on in Egypt and the idea is how to deal with the Gaza border. Israel is hoping that the biggest share will be basically taken on by Egypt. So Egypt will relax the border so that Israel doesn't have to go the full way. Long-term, that's the process: to open the border.' It was hard to be certain about the

¹¹²Shmuel Bar, Author interview in person, February 27, 2013.

¹¹³"Hamas Official Confirms Indirect Talks with Israel," *JPost.com*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=303580>; "Hamas Negotiates with Israel the Opening of Gaza Borders," Radio, *The Voice of Russia*, (February 20, 2013), http://english.ruvr.ru/2013_02_20/Hamas-negotiates-with-Israel-the-opening-of-Gaza-borders/.

¹¹⁴"Hamas Arrests Hardline Islamists over Rocket Attacks," *Agence France Presse -- English*, March 22, 2013.

¹¹⁵Dan Williams, "Hamas Appeals to Egypt After Israel Halves Gaza Fishing Zone," *Reuters*, March 22, 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/03/22/uk-palestinians-israel-truce-idUKBRE92L0DX20130322>.

future course, however because ‘everything’s up in the air [...] because we’re in between governments and the process [...] obviously stopped after December. I think, as far as I understand, Egypt is still willing to be the venue for the talks to continue.’¹¹⁶

Within months, however, Hamas’s optimism began to fade, along with talk of easing Gaza’s isolation. Just as Hamas was shifting away from Iran and Syria and towards Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey, those countries encountered changing conditions that would see a government hostile to Hamas take power (Egypt) and their influence curtailed (Qatar and, to a certain extent, Turkey). Even before this, the relationship between Gaza and Morsi’s Egypt was highly contradictory. As Berti explained,

the interest to keep [the border] as monitored as possible and to prevent infiltrations, and prevent smuggling [has continued since the fall of Mubarak]. That’s ... an interest of the security establishment, but it’s also the interest of [President Morsi], who doesn’t want to have another big fiasco like the one last August when 16 Egyptian security personnel were [killed]. [...] [T]he difference is that he also has a competing interest, to follow up, first of all, on his promises: One of the things he said after the election is that he would open the border. He met with high officials from Hamas, he met with Meshaal and with Haniyeh in the summer, I think, after the elections, he said that was the direction, that makes sense given the ideological connections and all that between the Brotherhood and Hamas. ...At the beginning the interest to open up and to show a real change with the regime trumped the security concern, meaning that he started to make a few announcements and, as far as I understand, there started to be some relaxation of the border. Then the attack happened, and then they closed it off again, and [since] then [...] the opening has been going forward, but at a very glacial pace because they are very reluctant.¹¹⁷

The instability on the Gaza-Egypt border continued in 2013. In March, the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram accused Hamas of killing 16 Egyptian border security guards in retaliation for Egypt’s closure of smuggling tunnels. Hamas’s armed wing vehemently denied this claim.¹¹⁸ As Berti points out, ‘the way out of [the difficulty with

¹¹⁶Berti, interview.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Khaled Abu Toameh, “Hamas Denies Involvements in Sinai Attack That Left 16 Egyptian Dead,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 15, 2013, sec. NEWS.

border insecurity], which I've heard from a number of Egyptian officials as well, is to [...] get Hamas on board on closing the tunnels, because that's the trade-off: [We] open the border for you, but you deal with the tunnels.'¹¹⁹ Although Al-Ahram's report seems to contradict what Hamas would want, it is not entirely far-fetched. Closing tunnels was highly problematic for Hamas. Although it had an interest in cracking down on Salafists in Gaza, it was also—especially its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades—heavily reliant on the smuggling tunnels. Berti explains, 'Hamas runs the tunnels. There's a tunnel ministry, you get a permit, they regulate the construction, they collect taxes from it. And a lot of the... tunnels are run by Hamas's military wing, so the Qassam Brigades are making money directly, which means there's also potential for intra-organizational strife. If the Hamas government starts to shut down all the tunnels, this will result in people from the Qassam Brigades losing money, so it's a problem.'¹²⁰ It is therefore possible that, even as Hamas's political leadership wished to open the crossing with Egypt, increase security on the border, and crack down on Salafists, members of its military wing resisted such moves because they would result in a loss of income. It is even possible that they used violence to ensure that Egypt did not open the crossings and Gaza continued to rely on tunnels—just as some locals reported was the case in the early days of Hamas's control of the territory.¹²¹ On top of all this, a further incident occurred in May in which seven Egyptian guards were kidnapped.¹²²

Positive reinforcement of the status quo, which could have made maintaining a calm with Israel more palatable to Hamas, was difficult because the Morsi government in Egypt was not as supportive of Gaza as Hamas had hoped and cooperation with it

¹¹⁹Berti, interview.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹"Ruling Palestine I: Gaza Under Hamas."

¹²²"Hamas Tightens Border Security After Kidnapping of Egyptian Officers," *Ahram Online*, May 16, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/71614/Egypt/Politics-/Hamas-tightens-border-security-after-kidnapping-of.aspx>.

involved trade-offs Hamas, or parts of it, may have been unwilling to make. On 3 July 2013, however, things became much worse as Morsi was forcibly removed from government by the Egyptian military after mass protests against his rule had swept throughout Egypt.¹²³ Two days later, further attacks in Sinai, one of which originated in Rafah, Gaza, led the new Egyptian government to seal the Rafah crossing entirely, sparking protest from Hamas. Meanwhile, ‘Ahmed Assaf, a Fatah spokesman, blamed Hamas for the closure of the terminal. He said that Hamas’s meddling in the internal affairs of Egypt—by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood—[had] harmed the national interests of the Palestinians’. Some in Fatah even went so far as to call for Gazans to follow Egyptians’ lead and overthrow Hamas.¹²⁴ Egypt also redoubled efforts to destroy all Hamas’s smuggling tunnels and Hamas soon claimed Egypt was flying helicopters over the Gaza Strip. A Hamas official complained ‘Even [former Egyptian president] Hosni Mubarak did not starve the Gaza Strip. By destroying the tunnels without providing an alternative, the Egyptians are punishing the entire population of the Gaza Strip and deepening the humanitarian and economic crisis’. Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook even went so far as openly to muse that Egypt might be attempting to restore the control over Gaza it had when it occupied the territory from 1948 to 1967.¹²⁵ Hamas even began holding military parades to show Egypt they were ready for battle if it sought to topple them, bringing warnings from Egypt against threatening Egyptian

123Ben Wedeman, Reza Sayah, and Matt Smith, “Coups Topple Egypt’s Morsi; Supporters Reportedly Rounded up,” *CNN*, July 4, 2013, http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/03/world/meast/egypt-protests/index.html?hpt=hp_t1.

124Aswat Masriya, “Egypt; One Soldier Dead, Three Injured in Sinai Attacks,” *Africa News*, July 5, 2013; Khaled Abu Toameh, “Hamas Calls on Egypt to Reopen Rafah Crossing,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 8, 2013, sec. NEWS.

125Khaled Abu Toameh, “Hamas: Egypt Trying to Restore Rule Over Gaza,” *www.JPost.com*, July 23, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Hamas-Egypt-is-trying-to-restore-sovereignty-over-Gaza-320825>.

national security.¹²⁶ The effects of the tunnel closures were serious, with Hamas losing an estimated \$230 million per month.¹²⁷ The loss of a sympathetic government in Egypt had turned the tables dramatically against Hamas. As Hamas's very control of the Gaza Strip was threatened, the status quo risked becoming dangerously untenable.

At the same time, forces in the wider region were aligning against another Hamas ally: Qatar. Just before Morsi's ouster in Egypt, the Qatari emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani surrendered rule of the country to his son, who wished to give Qatar a lower profile. By September, the situation was bad enough for Hamas that its external leadership officially agreed to leave Qatar.¹²⁸ In fact, Khaled Meshaal was still in Qatar at least nine months later, when he was interviewed by Charlie Rose on America's PBS network.¹²⁹ Since then, rumours have again surfaced that he has been forced out and now lives in Turkey, but there has been no official report of this.¹³⁰ Qatar, and its popular satellite news channel Al-Jazeera, had been vocal supporters of the Arab Spring protests in general and of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in particular. The fall of Morsi meant a deterioration in Qatar's relations with Egypt. At the same time, the Saudis never approved of Al-Jazeera, Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, or Qatar's outsized influence in the wider region. As *The Economist* noted in 2013, 'all the other monarchs of the Gulf, bar none, wanted Sheikh Hamad and Qatar taken down a

¹²⁶Khaled Abu Toameh, "Hamas Threatens Egypt, Israel and Palestinian Authority," *Gatestone Institute*, September 27, 2013, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3993/hamas-egypt-israel-palestinian-authority>; "Egypt FM Puts Hamas on Notice: Threatens 'Harsh Response', 'Military and Security' Options," *The Tower*, September 27, 2013, <http://www.thetower.org/egypt-fm-hamas-harsh-response/>.

¹²⁷"Hamas Loses \$230 Million a Month Due to Tunnel Closure," *JNS.org*, October 28, 2013, <http://www.jns.org/news-briefs/2013/10/28/tunnel-closure-costing-hamas-230-million-a-month>.

¹²⁸"Report: Hamas Leader Mashaal Agrees to Leave Qatar," *Ynet*, September 27, 2013, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4433810,00.html>.

¹²⁹Charlie Rose, "Charlie Rose Interviews Khaled Meshaal," *Charlie Rose* (Doha: PBS, July 28, 2014), <http://video.pbs.org/video/2365297457/>.

¹³⁰Rafaat Murra, "Attacking Khaled Meshaal," *Middle East Monitor - The Latest from the Middle East*, January 20, 2015, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/16448-attacking-khaled-meshaal>.

peg or two'.¹³¹ Saudi Arabia even went so far as to threaten to close Qatar's only land border if it did not cut ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and close Al Jazeera, among other grievances.¹³² Though it is not clear whether Meshaal has been forced to move to Turkey, it is clear that he can no longer live as openly and easily in Qatar, which is under growing international pressure not to host him. The external leadership may once again be (or have been) robbed of a haven.

In the meantime, Turkey's support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as its criticism of the coup that ousted Morsi in Egypt, led to a souring of ties between Turkey and Egypt and made cooperation between the former and Hamas more difficult. Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had planned to visit Gaza in July, but postponed due to the turmoil in Egypt. He was soon thereafter forced to cancel the visit altogether due to his criticism of the West's and the Arab states' 'double standards' with regard to Morsi's ouster, which the US did not label a coup in order to avoid being forced by its own laws to implement sanctions on the Egyptian government.¹³³ As world attention focused ever more on the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State there and in Iraq, Turkey would also find itself increasingly cajoled into cooperating with an international coalition against IS made up largely of powers opposed to Hamas, including the US and Saudi Arabia. Hamas was fast losing support

131 "No More Own Goals," *The Economist*, September 28, 2013,

<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21586886-new-emir-wants-more-discipline-home-and-less-risk-taking-abroad-no-more-own>.

132 "Saudi Arabia Threatens To Lay Siege To Qatar: Cooperation Or Confrontation?," *The Huffington Post*, March 9, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-hearst/saudi-arabia-threatens-to_b_4930518.html; This even lead some to speculate that Saudi Arabia might even close its airspace to planes registered in Qatar, forcing its well known flag carrier, Qatar Airways, to fly around Saudi Arabia, costing it time, money, and passengers. See: Courtney Trenwith, "Saudi Could Block Qatar Airways from Air Space: Military Analyst," *Arabian Business*, March 16, 2014, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/saudi-could-block-qatar-airways-from-air-space-military-analyst-542699.html>.

133 "Erdogan Cancels Gaza Trip After Running Afoul of Egypt Government," *www.JPost.com*, August 4, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Erdogan-cancels-Gaza-trip-after-running-afoul-of-Egypt-government-322005>.

among Arab and Muslim governments in the region.

If Hamas had been overly optimistic in assuming that the rise of Morsi in Egypt had changed Middle Eastern politics in its favour, it cannot be faulted for staying still when it became apparent that this was not the case. Even before Morsi was ousted, Hamas officials allegedly met in Beirut with representatives of Iran and Hezbollah to discuss their common cause against Israel and to agree to disagree about Syria.¹³⁴ Previous efforts at reconciliation had failed, but these seem to have succeeded, perhaps due to the pressure on Hamas caused by the fall of Morsi. By September, representatives of both Hamas and Iran were reporting improved ties and media reports had also surfaced of resumed financial backing.¹³⁵

During these difficult times, Hamas upheld its ceasefire with Israel, but its control of other groups was imperfect. In February, Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian in the exclusion zone along the Gaza border. Fighters from the PRC saw this as a violation of the ceasefire and launched grad rockets into Israel, which caused no damage. As one PRC fighter explained, 'We are committed to a ceasefire as long as the occupation is, but Hamas is a government. Their interests are not the same as ours. Should we ask for their permission to attack when Israel violates the agreement?'¹³⁶ This particular incident did not lead to an escalation, but one on 11 March did. Islamic Jihad militants fired mortars at what they say were Israeli tanks attempting to enter the southern Gaza Strip near Khan Yunis. Israel responded with an air strike that killed three of the militants. It is possible that Israeli forces were attempting to recover an Israeli drone that

134"Report: Hamas, Iran Secretly Met in Beirut to Talk Truce," *www.JPost.com*, July 28, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Report-Hamas-Iran-secretly-met-in-Beirut-to-talk-truce-321260>.

135"Hamas Announces Stronger Pact, 'Axis of Resistance' With Iran and Hezbollah," *The Tower*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.thetower.org/straying-hamas-appears-returning-iran-embrace/>.

136Ian Black, "Gaza Militants Put Pressure on Hamas and Fragile Ceasefire: Islamists Put Little Hope in Kerry Talks as Border Clashes Threaten Truce with Israel," *The Guardian*, February 22, 2014, Final edition edition, sec. GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES.

had malfunctioned and crashed in the vicinity two hours earlier.¹³⁷ Later that day and into the next, Islamic Jihad responded to that strike by launching 90 rockets at Israel, leading Israel to hit 29 targets belonging to Islamic Jihad and Hamas. Hamas spokesman Ihab al-Ghassin said that Hamas held Israel responsible for the deteriorating situation and warned it ‘of the consequences of any escalation’, though it did not participate itself.¹³⁸ Embarrassingly for Hamas, Egypt brokered a return to the ceasefire directly with Islamic Jihad, without informing Hamas about its actions.¹³⁹ Despite all this, Hamas remained popular in the Gaza Strip, once again showing the difficulty of sanctioning an entire population in the hope of turning it against its government.¹⁴⁰ There can be little doubt, however, that the heavy siege was weakening Hamas’s ability to pay workers, fight crime, and otherwise carry out government functions, even if this did not yet cause a fall in its popularity. Across the border in Israel, opponents of the ceasefire were also becoming more vocal, with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman telling a television audience that Israel had ‘no alternative to a full reoccupation of the entire Gaza Strip’.¹⁴¹

This round of escalation was brief and both sides sought to send messages rather than escalate. Islamic Jihad launched more rockets than had been launched in a day since Operation Pillar of Defence, but it launched them almost exclusively at unpopulated areas. Israel, for its part, also retaliated with a big number, hitting 29 sites in Gaza. Its targets were limited to militant sites, however, and these had generally been abandoned hours before, as the militants fled expecting retaliation. Israel’s former

137“Israel Raid Kills Three Islamic Jihad Fighters in Gaza,” *Agence France Presse*, March 11, 2014.

138“Israeli Warplanes Strike Back over Gaza Rocket Salvo,” *Agence France Presse -- English*, March 12, 2014.

139“Egypt ‘Intentionally’ Ignored Hamas on Gaza Ceasefire,” *Maan News Agency*, March 13, 2014, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=681373>.

140“Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No - 51,” *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, March 22, 2014.

141“Israel Must ‘Reoccupy’ Gaza: Lieberman,” *Agence France Presse -- English*, March 12, 2014.

National Security Advisor Uzi Dayan explained what he called ‘a battle of deterrence’: ‘The Israeli approach is one where we respond with force in order to restore deterrence but not so brutally as to oblige them to retaliate too violently, with the hope that there will not be victims.’¹⁴² City of Gaza employee Abdalfatah echoed this assessment when he told this author during the flare-up that he believed Islamic Jihad’s rocket fire was ‘*rada*’ (deterrence) aimed at Israel in retaliation for killing three of their members. He noted that, at that moment, they were only launching short-range rockets that landed near Gaza. If Israel were to kill more PIJ members, they would launch longer-range Grad rockets. If those killed Israelis, there would be a war. ‘Everyone knows how to play the game now.’¹⁴³

On 23 April, Hamas and the PA announced that they had reached an agreement on a unity government.¹⁴⁴ Within days, the two sides signalled their seriousness by lifting bans on their respective opposition’s newspapers in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁴⁵ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately halted ongoing peace negotiations with the PA as a result of this deal, though Abbas attempted to reassure Israel, Europe, and the US that any unity government, even with Hamas in it, ‘would work under my orders and my policy’.¹⁴⁶ It was not immediately clear how the unity deal would change things on the ground, as it did not require Hamas’s armed wing or

¹⁴²“Gaza Groups, Israel Seek Political Gains after Flare-Up,” *Agence France Presse*, March 13, 2014.

¹⁴³Abdalfatah, interview.

¹⁴⁴Robert Tait, “Fatah and the Hamas Agree Unity Government,” *The Telegraph*, April 23, 2014, Online edition, sec. Middle East - Palestinian Authority, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/palestinianauthority/10783716/Fatah-and-the-Hamas-agree-unity-government.html>.

¹⁴⁵“Hamas Lifts 6-Year Ban on Popular West Bank Newspaper in Gaza,” *Israel Hayom*, May 8, 2014, http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=17355; Reuters, “Pro-Hamas Newspaper Back on Sale in West Bank in New Unity Step,” *Chicagotribune.com*, May 10, 2014, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-palestinian-israel-hamas-20140510,0,3391873.story>.

¹⁴⁶Associated Press, “Abbas Tries to Reassure Israel About Hamas Role,” *The Epoch Times*, April 26, 2014, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/642580-abbas-tries-to-reassure-israel-about-hamas-role/>.

security services to disarm, nor did it place them under PA control.¹⁴⁷ A Hamas source explained that the goal was to shift towards a 'Hezbollah model'. 'If anyone expects Hamas to hand over its missile network to the PA, he's making a big mistake. Hamas wants to avoid ministerial responsibility for civilian matters, but it wants to maintain its power as a popular-resistance group.'¹⁴⁸ Hamas had long been unable to pay its workers as the siege had cut off vital revenues. Rather than encouraging Hamas to give up or someone else to take over power, however, this statement suggests that Hamas was instead trying to get the PA to take over financing the day-to-day governance of Gaza while it went back to 'resistance', which can only be assumed to be a renewed focus on at times violent opposition towards Israel and any moves towards negotiations. Giving up on day-to-day responsibilities and governance would thus theoretically reduce the number of targets available to Israel's deterrent policy. It could also help to drag the PA back towards resistance if offices in Gaza now seen as its responsibility became targets of Israeli attack.

According to Kobi Michael, the Israeli view taken at the time was nuanced. He contended that Netanyahu was not opposed to the unity government, though he claimed to be in public statements.

This is a paradoxical logic. On the one hand, we have to condemn the unity government, ...we have to make all the effort in order to keep the political achievement we have reached [that the three Quartet conditions are upheld by Hamas]. We have to remember that Hamas is a terror organization and that we have to keep... the international community from supporting them. We have to be very, very aware [of] the possibility that the unity government will become a platform for supporting Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, we do remember that Hamas is the... real political power in the Gaza Strip and we have to remember that they are a population of 1.5 million people who have to live and we don't want to have a humanitarian crisis. So you have to balance and you have to manoeuvre and you have

147" Hamas Not Giving up Military Wing, Despite Agreement," *Ammonnews.net*, May 3, 2014, <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?artid=25155#.U3N8iPldWSo>.

148Jack Khoury, "Hamas Wants to Employ the 'Hezbollah Model,'" *Haaretz.com*, May 19, 2014, Online edition, sec. Diplomacy and Defense, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/premium-1.591501>.

to play the right... play in order to assure that it will not be or become a humanitarian crisis [and] that Hamas will not gain [militarily] from this situation. And here, the idea that we have common strategic interests with the Egyptians... plays in our favour. Here, by cooperating with the Egyptians, we can deter Hamas without using military force.¹⁴⁹

At the same time, the humiliating language used by the PA threatened the longevity of the unity deal while simultaneously increasing pressure on Hamas to show its strength. The Ramallah-based news agency Ma'an described the unity deal thus: 'Weakened Hamas cedes power to save face'. In the same article, Adnan Abu Amer, politics professor at Gaza's Ummah University, mused 'Hamas gave in, either from a genuine desire for reconciliation or from a lack of options, and it still needs time to repair the damage sustained from being in power'. All of these factors were negative from a deterrence perspective. After all, political weakness threatened Hamas's power and acted as a 'push' factor even as Hamas's military strength was as great as ever, a 'pull' factor that could intensify its willingness to attack. Indeed, both Hamas and Islamic Jihad said they would continue to work to liberate all of historic Palestine, with Ismael Haniyeh speaking of their role as 'teachers and preachers' and Islamic Jihad leader Khaled Al-Batesh saying 'Weapons [of resistance] will remain in our hands [. . .] in order to liberate all of Palestine'.¹⁵⁰

This apparent disconnect between the goals of Fatah and Hamas began to show more prominently in June, when Hamas asked the PA to pay its employees' salaries and the PA refused.¹⁵¹ Hamas spokesman Hussam Badran then called on the Qassam Brigades in the West Bank to kidnap Israeli soldiers and settlers there, echoing a similar statement from Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in April, in which he said that

¹⁴⁹Michael, interview.

¹⁵⁰Dalit Halevi and Tova Dvorin, "Hamas, Islamic Jihad Vow to Continue Terror - No Matter What," News, *Arutz Sheva*, (June 8, 2014), <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181470>.

¹⁵¹"Hamas to Palestinian Authority: Take Our Employees Onto Your Payroll," *Middle East Online*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=66412>.

kidnapping Israeli soldiers was ‘a top priority’.¹⁵² A third statement by the head of all of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, in May may also have been a signal to the Qassam Brigades to execute a kidnapping to free Palestinian prisoners, which is what Israeli security believes.¹⁵³ Just two days after Badran’s statement, a Qassam Brigades cell in Hebron complied with his instructions, abducting three Israeli teens who were hitch-hiking home from a yeshiva near Hebron in the West Bank. Hamas leaders initially denied any knowledge of the kidnapping and some commentators speculated that the Hamas members responsible for the abduction were a ‘rogue branch’ registering its protest at the unity agreement.¹⁵⁴ Evidence in addition to Badran’s call for kidnappings soon began to mount, however, that suggested that the cell was not simply acting on its own. On 19 June, the IDF claimed that a Hamas militant known to train kidnappers, Saleh al-Arouri, had coordinated the abduction.¹⁵⁵ Two months later, al-Arouri finally admitted that he had coordinated the attack, though this was not yet confirmed by anyone else in Hamas. Hugh Lovatt, Israel and Palestine coordinator at the European Council on Foreign Relations, was sceptical of this claim, saying ‘Given the timing I would be very suspicious about his claim. I still don’t believe Hamas as an organisation and its upper echelons sanctioned the kidnappings—something that Israeli intelligence also

152Elhanan Miller, “Hamas Calls on Armed Wing to Kill Soldiers and Settlers,” *The Times of Israel*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-calls-on-armed-wing-to-kill-soldiers-and-settlers/>; “Kidnapping Israeli Soldiers ‘Top Priority’ Hamas Says,” April 16, 2014, <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/insideisrael/2014/April/Kidnapping-Israeli-Soldiers-Top-Priority-Hamas-says/>.

153YAAKOV LAPPIN, “Mashaal’s Speech May Have Been Signal for Kidnapping,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2014, sec. NEWS.

154Times of Israel staff, “Hamas Denies Any Knowledge of Kidnapped Teens,” *The Times of Israel*, June 14, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-denies-any-knowledge-surrounding-disappearance-of-teens/>; Shlomi Eldar, “Accused Kidnappers Are Rogue Hamas Branch,” *Al-Monitor*, June 29, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/qawasmeh-clan-hebron-hamas-leadership-mahmoud-abbas.html>.

155Ari Yashar, “IDF Reveals Hamas in Turkey Likely Behind Kidnapping,” *Arutz Sheva*, June 19, 2014, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181951>.

believes'.¹⁵⁶ A month later, however, Hamas's external head, who is responsible for strategic decisions like policies on abduction, said in a BBC television interview 'Hamas hasn't avoided responsibility for this event. Hamas cells did it, but in the context of self defence against Israeli occupation and settlement policy'.¹⁵⁷

The confusion over who planned, authorized, and carried out the abduction may simply be down to Hamas's organizational structure. As Hamas supporter and friend of Khaled Meshaal explains in his book on Hamas (which was written before the kidnappings and thus did not refer to them): 'Issues pertaining to major matters of policy, such as whether to end or continue a cease-fire, are indeed taken at the highest level of the leadership of the Hamas movement. ... However, the tactics used to force Israel to release prisoners and withdraw from occupied land are local choices.'¹⁵⁸

Benedetta Berti made much the same point in an email to this author, using the example of the 2006 abduction of Gilad Shalit, just before which Hamas's internal leadership was making conciliatory noises:

- 1) The fact that the political leaders did not know about the kidnapping is NOT [because] the QB [Qassam Brigades] went behind their back—it is the way Hamas works (i.e operational autonomy of the QB);
- 2) the move per se did not go well with the political leaders' conciliatory strategy
- 3) yet after it happened the shura council etc stepped in and the organization [fell] in line.¹⁵⁹

The 2014 kidnapping seems to fit this mould as well, with initial denials of any knowledge, followed by mounting evidence, finally topped off with an admission of involvement. It should be noted, however, that even Meshaal's final admission of Hamas involvement does not mean that he authorized it or even knew about it at the

¹⁵⁶Orlando Crowcroft, "Hamas Official: We Were behind the Kidnapping of Three Israeli Teenagers," *The Guardian*, August 21, 2014, Online edition, <http://www.nexis.com/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=5CYJ-YK71-JC60-C4W2&csi=8277,10903,10911,166768,138211,10939,138620&oc=00240&perma=true>.

¹⁵⁷"The War of the Tunnels," *Panorama* (Israel and Gaza: BBC, September 23, 2014).

¹⁵⁸Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch, 2011), 242.

¹⁵⁹Benedetta Berti, "'Gilad Shalit' Email Correspondence with Author," October 8, 2014.

time. As Berti and Tamimi point out, Hamas is intentionally structured so that the political leadership is unaware of military operations. This allows Hamas political members to move more freely, as interrogating or killing them will not affect operations. Presumably, Meshaal could have communicated to the Qassam Brigades that kidnappings should not occur. It seems the Hamas leadership wished to give no such instruction, however, given Hamas spokesman Hussam Badran's comments just two days before the abduction and Meshaal's own comments prior to that. There is therefore no reason to conclude that the kidnapping was a 'rogue' operation unattributable to Hamas as a whole.

The abduction of Israeli citizens, particularly innocent youths, crosses one of Israel's most dramatic 'red lines'. Believing the teens were still alive, it initially responded with a search-and-rescue operation dubbed 'Operation Brother's Keeper', arresting 80 Hamas members in the West Bank in the first two days. It did not immediately attack Hamas in Gaza as doubts still lingered about Hamas's involvement.¹⁶⁰ By the 15th, however, Netanyahu had announced that Israel was convinced Hamas was directly to blame.¹⁶¹ US Secretary of State John Kerry agreed, stating that 'many indications point to Hamas' involvement'.¹⁶² Israel expanded its operation to arrest several Hamas leaders in the West Bank, but still left Gaza mostly untouched for the moment.¹⁶³ In fact, the IDF even reportedly began reducing raids on

¹⁶⁰Yaakov Lappin, "Watch: IDF Arrests 80 Hamas Members in West Bank in Response to Kidnapping," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 15, 2014, Online edition, sec. Defense, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/IDF-arrests-80-Hamas-members-in-West-Bank-in-response-to-kidnapping-359354>.

¹⁶¹Tovah Lazaroff, Yaakov Lappin, and Khaled Abu Toameh, "IDF Targets Hamas as PM Says Group Took the Boys. Security Source: We're Assuming the Teenagers Are Alive · Kerry: This Was a Despicable Act of Terrorism · Army Issues Limited Call-up of Reservists," *Jerusalem Post*, June 16, 2014, sec. NEWS.

¹⁶²Barak Ravid, "Kerry Points to Hamas Role in Israel's Kidnapping," *Haaretz*, June 15, 2014, Online edition, sec. Diplomacy and Defense, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.598941>.

¹⁶³Mark Weiss, "Israel Arrests Hamas Leadership in Security Sweep," *Irish Times*, June 17, 2014, Online edition, sec. Middle East, <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/israel-arrests-hamas-leadership-in-security-sweep-1.1834713>.

Hamas in the West Bank on 23 June, concentrating instead on finding the three teens. This may have been because Israel's heavy-handed approach in the West Bank was infuriating Palestinians there and making life difficult for Mahmoud Abbas, whom the Israelis wanted to help find the boys.¹⁶⁴ Israel's approach up to that point risked an escalation that it did not want. Israel did find itself launching an increasing number of small strikes in Gaza in response to a steady stream of rockets from there, which in turn were being launched by smaller Islamist groups like the PRC in response to the Israeli operation in the West Bank.¹⁶⁵ Israel did not escalate because Hamas was not yet involved in rocket launches. It was the subject of smaller strikes purely because Israel believed it was not doing enough to stop other groups' launches.¹⁶⁶

On the other side, Hamas in Gaza was doing its best to deter Israel from escalating. Even after it was discovered that the teens had been murdered, Al Monitor reports that 'Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that Hamas is not interested in a confrontation at this stage, but added, "If such a confrontation is imposed, the world will discover the fragility of our enemy." Abu Zuhri warned against Israel continuing to escalate the situation and suggested that it not test Hamas' patience for too long.'¹⁶⁷ Abu Zuhri's claim that Hamas (in Gaza, at least) was not interested in an escalation was underscored by the fact that it had not yet joined in launching rockets. Israel began to strike back more forcefully, however, after the boys' bodies were found, as it held Hamas responsible for their deaths and for the steady drizzle of rockets from the Strip.

164Josef Federman and Karin Laub, "Palestinian Leader Defends Cooperation with Israel," *Associated Press International*, June 18, 2014, sec. INTERNATIONAL NEWS; DOMESTIC NEWS.

165Mohammed Daraghme, "Militants Killed in Israeli Airstrike in Gaza," *Associated Press International*, June 27, 2014, sec. INTERNATIONAL NEWS; DOMESTIC NEWS.

166Yaakov Lappin and Daniel K. Eisenbud, "IAF Strikes Terrorists Ready to Fire. Source: Hamas Has to Be More Assertive against Anyone Firing Missiles," *Jerusalem Post*, June 30, 2014, sec. NEWS.

167Asmaa al-Ghoul, "Hamas, Islamic Jihad Warn Israel About Retaliation in Gaza," *Al-Monitor*, July 2, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulseen/originals/2014/07/hamas-islamic-jihad-palestine-israel-strikes-war.html>.

At the same time, however, a ‘senior security source’ stated that ‘If Hamas’s aim is to escalate, we will act accordingly’, suggesting Israel also did not yet wish for another extended round of violence in Gaza.¹⁶⁸ On 3 July, Israel reported that 40 rockets rained down on Israel. In response, Israel sent additional troops to the Gaza border. Lieutenant Colonel Peter Lerner said of the move: ‘Everything we are doing is to de-escalate the situation but on the other hand be prepared for actions that can develop if they do not de-escalate.’¹⁶⁹ On the other side, two ‘senior officials’ from Hamas also insisted Hamas had ‘no interest’ in escalation and wished to return to the previous ceasefire. Both sides clearly saw themselves as ‘defenders’, responding only to provocations by the other side.

Events were beginning to develop a momentum of their own. On the morning of 2 July, a day after the three murdered Israeli teens were buried, a Palestinian teen was burned alive by extremist Jewish youths in retaliation. Protests broke out among Palestinians in Jerusalem, which soon spread throughout Israel.¹⁷⁰ With protests and riots continuing and rockets still falling on southern Israel, the situation could no longer be seen as one of ‘restoring deterrence’. Demanding that Hamas stop rocket fire that had already started was a compelling demand, not a deterrent threat, and could thus be expected to require a ‘disproportionate’ response. On 3 July, Israel reportedly sent an official ultimatum to Hamas via the Egyptians to halt rocket fire within 48 hours. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that there were two possibilities. ‘One possibility is that the fire will stop and the quiet continues. The other is that the fire continues and then the

168Yaakov Lappin, “IAF Strikes 34 Targets Early on Tuesday. ‘If Hamas’s Aim Is to Escalate, We Will Act Accordingly,’ Senior Security Source Says,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 2, 2014, sec. NEWS.

169Josef Federman, “Israel Rushes Forces to Southern Border with Gaza,” *Associated Press International*, July 3, 2014, sec. INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

170Mohammed Daraghme, “Palestinian Teen Burned to Death, Autopsy Shows,” *Associated Press International*, July 5, 2014, sec. International News; Domestic News; Attila Somfalvi, Omri Efraim, and Itay Blumental, “Three Suspects in Murder of Arab Teen Confess to Crime,” *Ynetnews.com*, July 7, 2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4538864,00.html>.

increased forces that are in the south will act forcefully.’¹⁷¹ Sources within Hamas claimed the next day that a ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt would go into effect ‘within hours’.¹⁷²

It was not to be. Hamas had already launched its first rockets at Israel since 2012 on 30 June, but it had since refrained.¹⁷³ In the early hours of 7 July, seven Hamas members were killed in an Israeli air strike, which was itself in response to continuing rocket fire from Gaza.¹⁷⁴ Hamas vowed revenge and again launched rockets into Israel. Rockets that day also extended farther into Israel than any since 2012, hitting the city of Beersheba, 40 kilometres from the Strip. Israel retaliated by hitting over 30 targets near Rafah in southern Gaza.¹⁷⁵ With the conflagration appearing to spread rather than abate, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge the following day, the third ‘Gaza War’ since Hamas had taken control of the Strip seven years before. In many ways, this newest confrontation was also the most dramatic and potentially harmful, especially for Israel: Hamas immediately upped the ante, firing rockets at Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa the same day.¹⁷⁶ More worryingly, it specifically targeted Ben Gurion Airport, by far Israel’s main international airport, serving its two main cities, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, leading many airlines to halt all flights to Ben Gurion, thus in effect halting all their flights to Israel.¹⁷⁷ A ‘senior security source’ in Israel, meanwhile, claimed that Israel had destroyed more targets in Gaza in the first 36 hours of the operation than in all of Pillar

171Lea Speyer, “Hamas Given 48-Hour Ultimatum to Stop Rockets,” *Breaking Israel News*, July 4, 2014, 48, <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/17641/hamas-given-48-hour-ultimatum-stop-rockets/>.

172“Hamas Suggests Ceasefire with Israel ‘Within Hours,’” *World Bulletin*, July 4, 2014,

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/140048/thieves-in-mexico-steal-truck-with-radioactive-load>.

173Avi Issacharoff and Times of Israel staff, “Hamas Fires Rockets for First Time since 2012, Israeli Officials Say,” *The Times of Israel*, June 30, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-fired-rockets-for-first-time-since-2012-israeli-officials-say/>.

174Josef Federman, “Hamas Says 7 Militants Killed in Israeli Strikes,” *Associated Press International*, July 7, 2014, sec. INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

175“Gaza on Brink of War as Hamas Rockets Slam Israel,” *Agence France Presse -- English*, July 7, 2014.

176“Hamas Claims Rocket Fire on Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa,” *Agence France Presse*, July 8, 2014.

of Defence.¹⁷⁸ Israeli intelligence apparently believed this harsh response had made Hamas ready to accept a ceasefire, but it was mistaken. Israel paused its operation for six hours in response to an Egyptian ceasefire proposal, but Hamas did not reciprocate, leading Israel to expand operations, including calling up 8,000 additional reservists for a ground offensive.¹⁷⁹ Justice Minister Tzipi Livni emphasized that the goal of the operation was primarily to destroy Hamas's tunnel network and rocket launching capacity, but she also stated that she wasn't 'taking anything off the table', suggesting taking out Hamas's leadership and even toppling its government could be a goal.¹⁸⁰ In any case, Hamas's leaders were already underground, expecting to be targeted.¹⁸¹ Further attempts at ceasefires (on 27 July, 1 August, 5 August, and 11 August) all failed, though the one on 11 August did hold for six days after being extended beyond its initial 72-hour deadline.¹⁸² Finally, on 26 August, Israel and Hamas agreed to an open-ended ceasefire through their Egyptian intermediaries that is still holding at the time of writing in April 2015. Palestinians in Gaza poured onto the streets to celebrate Hamas's 'victory', while Israeli officials talked of the 'severe blow' Hamas had been dealt, which

177Aron Heller, "Airlines Ban Flights to Israel after Rocket Strike," *Associated Press International*, July 22, 2014, sec. Business News; International News; "Hamas Militants to Airlines: We're Targeting Ben-Gurion Airport," *NBC News*, July 11, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/hamas-militants-airlines-were-targeting-ben-gurion-airport-n153446>.

178YAAKOV LAPPIN, "'In 36 Hours, IAF Destroyed More Targets than in All of Pillar of Defense.' 'We Are Attacking Where We Can Operate,' Says Senior Security Source, Adding: Not a Single Hamas Brigade Commander Has a Home to Go back to," *Jerusalem Post*, July 10, 2014, sec. NEWS.

179Yaakov Lappin, "Hamas Searching for a Way Out of Conflict, Israeli Security Sources Believe," *www.JPost.com*, July 14, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Hamas-searching-for-a-way-out-of-conflict-Israeli-security-sources-believe-362758>; Herb Keinon and Yaakov Lappin, "Hamas Rejects Ceasefire; Netanyahu Authorizes IDF to Resume Strikes on Gaza," *www.JPost.com*, July 15, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/IDF-resumes-strikes-in-Gaza-after-Hamas-rejects-ceasefire-launches-dozens-of-rockets-362872>; Yaakov Lappin, "Cabinet Authorizes Call-up of 8,000 More Reservists. IDF Investigating Deaths of 4 Boys in Gaza · Terror Groups Fire More than 150 Rockets at Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2014, sec. News; "Israel Launches Ground Operation in Gaza," *Agence France Presse -- English*, July 17, 2014.

180Times of Israel staff, "Livni: All Options on Table, Including Bringing Down Hamas," *The Times of Israel*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/livni-all-options-on-table-including-bring-down-hamas/>.

181"Invisible Leaders: Senior Figures Go 'Underground,'" *The Guardian*, July 18, 2014, Final edition edition, sec. GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES.

included the destruction of an estimated 70-80% of its rocket inventory and all 32 attack tunnels the IDF had located leading into Israel.¹⁸³

Given Hamas's ability to halt a significant portion of commercial air traffic in and out of Israel, target cities ever farther from the Gaza border, and to remain in control of Gaza despite what certainly was a 'severe blow', the Israeli journalist and defence affairs expert Herb Keinon was surely right to ask Justice Minister Tzipi Livni if 'Israel was destined to "mow the lawn" in Gaza at ever-increasingly short intervals'.¹⁸⁴ The logic of these 'ever-increasingly short intervals' of conflict in Gaza suggests Israel would eventually end up toppling Hamas and reoccupying the Gaza Strip. There are a few points discussed in this chapter and thesis so far that suggest that Israel may instead be able to practice deterrence better, but that would require a change in approach. Israel has had considerable success with deterring Hamas violence directly via denial (the security barrier, intelligence operations, and its continued existence and ability to fight) and punishment (air strikes on Gaza) and with compelling directly (three wars and targeted killings), as well as some success deterring indirectly (via the PA in the late 1990s as well as actions to end Jordan's support for the group). Its policies on Gaza

182Khaled Abu Toameh and Reuters, "Hamas Spokesperson: We Did Not Agree to Extension of Cease-Fire Until Midnight," *www.JPost.com*, July 26, 2014, Web edition, sec. Operation Protective Edge, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Israel-agrees-to-extend-Gaza-cease-fire-by-four-hours-Israeli-official-says-368989>; "Israel, Gaza Militants Start 72-Hour Ceasefire," *Agence France Presse*, August 1, 2014; "Israel Calls off Gaza Truce, Fearing Soldier Abducted," *Agence France Presse*, August 1, 2014; "Israel Withdraws Gaza Troops as 72-Hour Truce Begins," *Agence France Presse*, August 5, 2014; "Israel 'Ready to Extend Gaza Truce Unconditionally,'" *Agence France Presse*, August 6, 2014; Karin Laub and Mohammed Daraghme, "Israel, Hamas Resume Fire After 3-Day Gaza Truce," *Yahoo News*, August 8, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/israel-hamas-resume-fire-3-day-gaza-truce-082928084.html>; "Fresh 72-Hour Truce Begins in Gaza," *Agence France Presse*, August 11, 2014; "Hamas Armed Wing Claim Rocket Attack on Jerusalem," *Agence France Presse*, August 19, 2014; "Israel Hits Gaza, Suspends Cairo Talks after Rocket Fire," *Agence France Presse*, August 19, 2014.

183Herb Keinon and Khaled Abu Toameh, "Israel Accepts yet Another Open-Ended Cease-Fire. Officials Say Hamas Took Huge Hit and Is on Verge of Losing Control of Gaza. Terrorist Group Claims Victory as Thousands Celebrate in Strip," *Jerusalem Post*, August 27, 2014, sec. News.

184Herb Keinon, "Livni: No Policy to Reoccupy Gaza, but If Rockets Don't Stop, 'All Options on Table,'" *www.JPost.com*, July 21, 2014, sec. Operation Protective Edge, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Livni-No-policy-to-reoccupy-Gaza-but-if-rockets-dont-stop-all-options-on-table-367171>.

have remained strikingly consistent since 2007. The ‘conciliatory promise’, a form of positive reinforcement that is on the flip-side of the deterrence coin and makes the status quo more attractive and therefore more stable, however, has too often been neglected. The following chapter will examine this oversight in greater detail and ask what options Israel has with regard to security vis-a-vis Hamas in the future.

7. Conclusion

The aim set out in the introduction of this thesis was to examine the relationship between Israel and Hamas using the updated, non-nuclear, restrictive, cumulative deterrence model set forth in chapter 2. Specifically, it set out to investigate what deterrence could tell us about—and how it might explain—periods of calm, escalation, cooperation, rising violence, falling violence, and tactical shifts and learning on both sides. The thesis attempted strictly to separate deterrence from compellence. What insights has that provided with regard to escalation, establishing and maintaining ‘rules of the game’, and the use of certain tactics and their timing? Do pre-emption, disruption, and compellence undermine deterrence? Does Israel focus too heavily on credibility (i.e. ‘pull’ factors) to the detriment of stability (‘push’ factors), as many scholars have asserted is a common mistake of ‘defenders’? How well does the Iron Wall strategy bring together pre-emption, disruption, compellence, and deterrence to create cumulative deterrence? Does the case of Israel versus Hamas also illuminate the limits of deterrence? This chapter will sum up the evidence on these questions from earlier chapters before turning to questions regarding Israel’s future. These include whether deterrence has become a default option for Israel to the exclusion of other approaches, whether it is sustainable over the longer term, what risks Israel may face in the future, how it might respond to them, and the possibilities for moving ‘beyond’ deterrence.

7.1 Israel's deterrence of Hamas—types, methods, successes, and failures

The non-nuclear, restrictive, and cumulative deterrence model laid out in chapter 2 of this thesis thus does provide explanations for periods of calm and escalation between Israel and Hamas. An absolute model based on the nuclear paradigm would have struggled to tell us much of anything about Israel and Hamas, seeing as it would merely a string of almost inexplicable deterrence failures or perhaps even a situation in which deterrence could not apply at all due to the non-state nature of the opponent. Furthermore, traditional Cold War models of deterrence would have difficulty explaining how Hamas could fail to be deterred considering the asymmetry between its capabilities and those of Israel. The so-called 'push factors' uncovered by Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein explain this: There are simply situations in which 'domestic' factors (in Hamas's case, pressures from its members and, later, the Gazan public) encouraging violence are too great to be overcome by deterrent threats, while criminological insights on proportionality explain how overly harsh punishments can encourage attacks. The insights on push factors and proportionality led this author to conclude that deterrence and compellence are fundamentally different tactics, the former concerned with maintaining the status quo and requiring 'proportional' attacks that lie within the current 'rules of the game', the latter concerned with changing the status quo and requiring an escalation to attacks outside the 'rules of the game'. A theme throughout this thesis has been the way in which 'proportional' reprisals can accumulate, however, leading to the erosion of a status quos and requiring compellence, via an escalation to 'disproportionate' reprisals, to achieve new periods of calm. The

calm Israel experienced in the late 1990s is also explained by the addition of Bar/Harkavy's concept of 'indirect deterrence', which accounts for Israel's partnership with the PA in countering Hamas.¹ Finally, the criminology provides both the theoretical basis and the evidence that deterrence can be learned through punishment in its concept of specific deterrence. Increasing levels of specific deterrence achieved over multiple rounds of violence is termed cumulative deterrence. One of the aims of this thesis was to assess the success and prospects of this cumulative deterrence and that will be the topic of section 7.2 below. First, however, we turn to a retrospective look at the model in practice throughout the case study chapters (4-6) of this thesis.

The model that has been used throughout the thesis to analyse the relationship between Israel and Hamas and to illustrate the forces working on Hamas that Israel can influence, directly or indirectly, in its attempts to deter Hamas is reproduced in figure 7.1 below.

1 Shmuel Bar, "Deterring Nonstate Terrorist Groups: The Case of Hizballah," *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (December 13, 2007): 469–93, doi:10.1080/01495930701750307; Robert E. Harkavy, "Triangular or Indirect Deterrence/compellence: Something New in Deterrence Theory?," *Comparative Strategy* 17, no. 1 (January 1998): 63–81, doi:10.1080/01495939808403132.

Diagram of 'push' and 'pull' factors

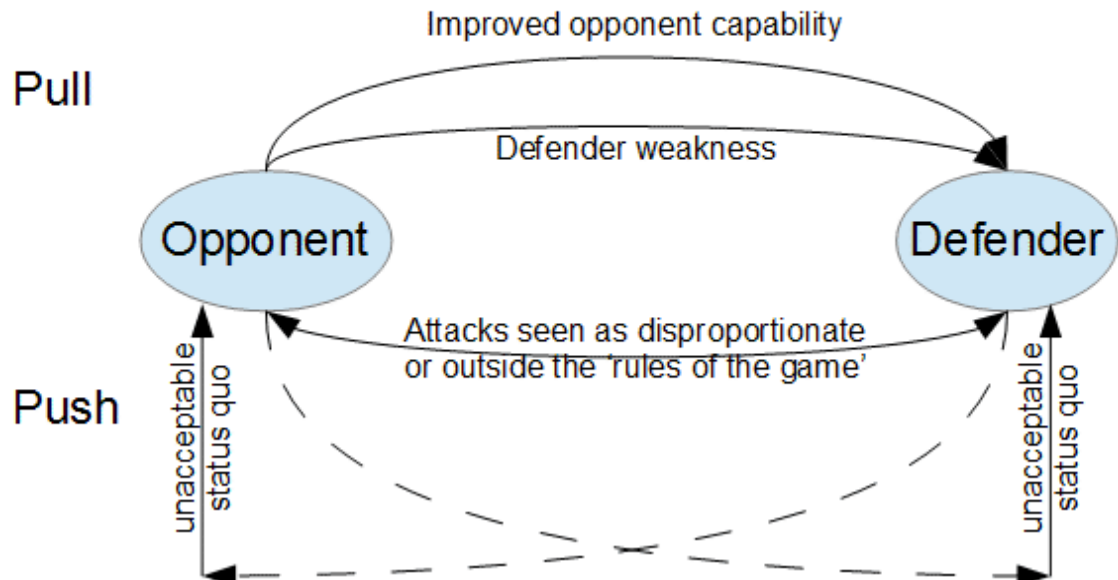


Figure 7.1: Diagram of the deterrence relationship between Israel, seen here as the 'defender', and Hamas, displayed as the 'opponent'.

This diagram works for both direct deterrence-by-punishment and deterrence by denial and it includes 'push' factors that make Hamas more likely to attack and that can make either side more willing to escalate. One push factor for either side is whether the type of attacks the other chooses and their severity fall within the currently perceived 'rules of the game'. For example, Israel's choice of reprisals, pre-emptive strikes, or targeted killing, and their magnitude, constitute one type of 'push' factor on Hamas. The dashed lines also show that both Israel and Hamas have some influence over the other's 'status quo' and therefore on how content each is to maintain it (though Israel's capability to affect Hamas's status quo, e.g. through the blockade of Gaza, is much greater). 'Indirect deterrence' functions in a similar manner, but is more complex, requiring a second diagram:

Diagram of 'push' and 'pull' factors in 'indirect' deterrence

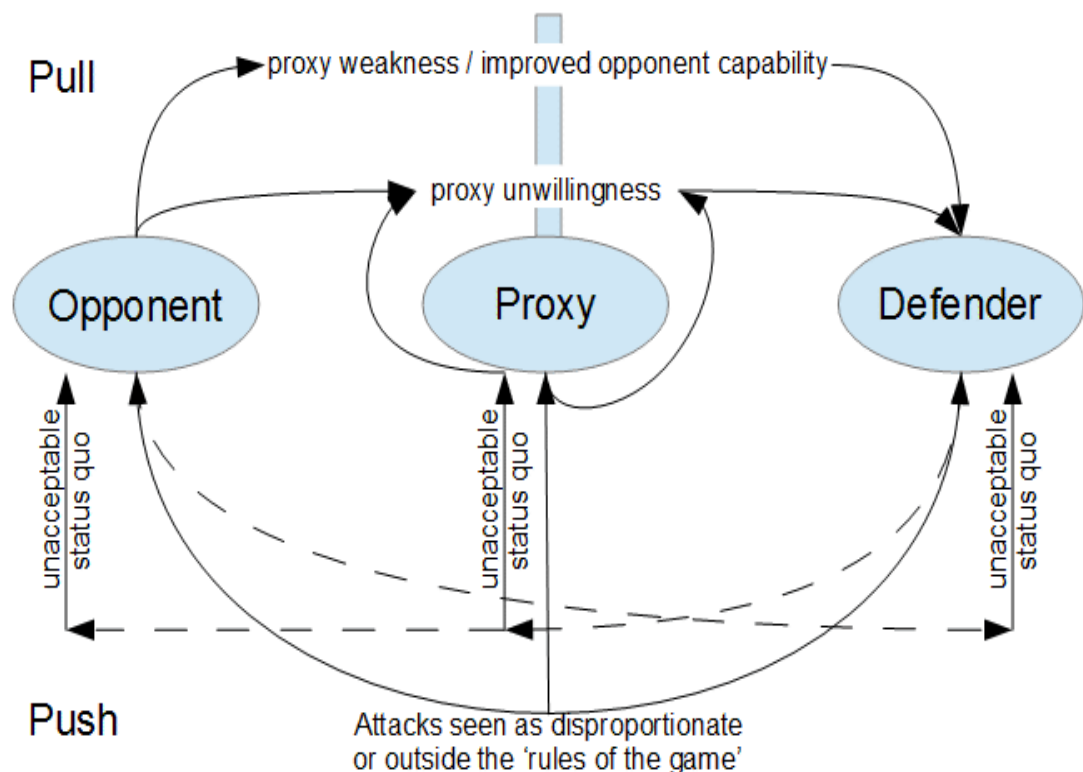


Figure 7.2: Model of a three-way indirect deterrence relationship. A defender can still strengthen deterrence during peaceful periods by maintaining strength and resolve, abiding by the established 'rules of the game', and improving the status quo, but now many of these aspects are related more closely to the proxy than the opponent, making calibration more complex.

The two models were used throughout to analyse and explain Israel's use of deterrence and its successes, failures, learning processes, and challenges. During the Oslo Period, covered in chapter 4, Israel turned to indirect deterrence against Hamas attacks, as it increasingly did not control the territories from which the attackers came, had few other means of direct deterrence, and did not yet have a barrier separating the Palestinian territories from Israel, which would later provide deterrence-by-denial. The Oslo Accords meant that Israel needed the PA for security and the PA needed Israel for a state. This alignment of interests allowed indirect deterrence to function, mostly without any 'deterrent' threats from Israel, as Arafat and the PA recognized that Israel's security

was important if there was ever to be a Palestinian state. Some conditionality was added, however, with Israeli leaders increasingly making progress on Oslo contingent upon improved security (in effect attempting to compel the proxy, the PA, to rein in Hamas). The evidence presented in the chapter suggests that restrictive deterrence was increasingly successful by the end of the 1990s and that Israel, the PA, and Hamas were all 'learning' in the situation, with Hamas shifting focus away from armed resistance, at least for the moment. The model depicted in figure 7.2 predicts that deterrence would fail, at least temporarily, if the PA (the proxy) came to view the status quo as unacceptable. The acceptable status quo in this case included progress on the foundation of a Palestinian state. Lack of progress towards it severely undermined the stability of the deterrence relationship. In fact, both sides saw their core concerns as insufficiently addressed, leading to a breakdown in their cooperation and in progress towards a Palestinian state, rendering the status quo unacceptable to the PA and further cooperation unpalatable. This, in turn, stalled progress on security, making further progress on the implementation of Oslo unpalatable for Israel. Their interests thus diverged, removing the foundation upon which the indirect deterrence of Hamas stood and weakening the PA's desire to stifle Hamas (which thus acted as a 'pull' factor encouraging attacks on Israel, the defender). Opportunities to restore this cooperation were missed, in part because Arafat underestimated the momentum events would take on, but also due to miscalculations on Israel's side. The result was a spiral into the violence of the Second Intifada and Israel's shift away from reliance on indirect deterrence altogether.

In the run-up to the 1956 Suez War, Israel attempted to use violence to halt negotiations between Israel and Britain on the removal of the latter's forces from the

Canal Zone in Egypt.² In 2000, Arafat attempted to use riots and violence to force Israel to grant concessions. In the case of Egypt in 1956, this convinced President Nasser that there was no point in continuing secret negotiations with Israel. The status quo was unattractive, as the choice was not between war and peace, but between war and Israeli sabotage and other covert actions in Egypt.³ In the case of the Second Intifada, the violence made the status quo, and thus, for the moment at least, the entire peace process, unacceptable to Israel. Eventually, the spiral of violence convinced Israel under Ariel Sharon to change tactics altogether and abandon the peace process. The conditionality slowly added in the 1990s ended up being a threat to the peace process in an unanticipated way. It was originally feared that it would hand Hamas an instruction manual for foiling the implementation of Oslo. In fact, Hamas violence actually began to decline as the Israeli government increased conditional demands. Instead, conditionality gave Israel and the PA ways to measure progress and accuse each other of acting in bad faith. This eventually led to the stagnation of the peace process and thus a deterioration in the status quo for the PA and, in turn, to Arafat's attempts also to increase the pressure (i.e. conditionality) on Israel, which led to the collapse of both the peace process and the indirect deterrence of Hamas. These conditional sanctions are similar to reprisals in deterrence-by-punishment in that they can also accumulate and establish a new status quo less palatable to both sides, making cooperation more difficult. Once these conditional sanctions had become the norm and led to stagnation in the peace process, actions by both sides were then examples of compellence, with Arafat attempting to compel greater urgency on the establishment of a Palestinian state by threatening Israel's security, and Israel threatening to halt progress on a Palestinian state

2 Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri, *The Fifty Years War: Israel and the Arabs* (London: Penguin Group and BBC Worldwide Ltd, 1998), 51–56.

3 Ibid., 55.

unless Arafat cracked down on terrorism. Once the situation had shifted to one of compellence, this began to undermine the deterrence relationship between Israel and the PA, which relied on cooperation. In effect, compellence undermined deterrence, a topic that became highly salient with Hamas's takeover of Gaza (see chapter 6).

Chapter 5 followed Israel's change of approach in the 2000s, when it shifted from indirect to direct deterrence-by-punishment and -by-denial against what was then still a non-state actor with no 'return address' (i.e. no specific territory that could be the target of reprisals). Israel learned in this period that targeted killings were not useful for deterrence—as opposed to compellence—if they were actually carried out (though a credible threat to use them may be). The model in 7.1 would suggest that Israel's killing of Raed Karmi during a period of relative quiet would be interpreted as disproportionate—outside the current rules of the game—as it constituted a violation and worsening of the status quo for Hamas. The result was indeed increased violence. Targeted killing was useful for compellence when violence was already high, however, as compellence functions by making the status quo unpleasant to encourage movement away from it in a specific direction. When Israel began killing and openly attempting to kill more Hamas political leaders during periods of heavy violence in 2003 and 2004, Hamas began asking for ceasefires, explicitly demanding a halt to targeted killings in exchange for quiet. Violence declined partly as a result, establishing a new status quo for deterrence.

The other half (or perhaps more) of the equation for halting the violence was deterrence-by-denial via the West Bank security barrier. Martin van Creveld has argued convincingly that properly defended walls have worked throughout history, pointing out that suicide bombers crossed into Israel almost exclusively from the West Bank, not

from Gaza, which already had a barrier around it during the Second Intifada.⁴ The fact that bombers did not originate in Gaza is striking considering Hamas's deep roots there and it suggests the barrier around the Gaza Strip kept suicide bombers out of Israel. In addition, Hillel Frisch discovered that, after sections of the West Bank barrier were built, 'fatalities within [Israel proper] declined to significantly less than half in areas parallel to where the fence existed, [while] they more than doubled in areas bordering [the West Bank] where no border existed.'⁵ The fact that attacks on unprotected areas doubled once some areas became harder to hit illustrates nicely one of deterrence-by-denial's most important limitations: attackers respond to it by shifting to more vulnerable targets (in the language of the model, they respond to the 'pull' factor of defender weakness in other places). If changing targets is difficult or impossible, they may also respond by shifting tactics instead. Hamas 'learned' to be increasingly deterred from suicide bombings in 2004 because getting suicide bombers into Israel became too costly. It responded to this denial by changing tactics and launching rockets and mortars instead. Such tactical shifts in response to denial are a constant risk and something Israel will have to deal with again soon, as Hamas may shift away from rockets and mortars as a result of the success of Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system. All tactics are not created equal, of course: Suicide bombings were much more deadly than projectile attacks. Hamas's move away from them from 2004 was thus a triumph for deterrence-by-denial and, in the form of ceasefire requests after targeted killings, deterrence-by-punishment. Like the period covered in chapter 4, the period in chapter 5 ended with a much lower level of violence as deterrence took hold.

4 Martin Van Creveld, *Defending Israel: A Controversial Plan Toward Peace*, 1st ed (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2004).

5 Hillel Frisch, "(The) Fence or Offense? Testing the Effectiveness of 'the Fence' in Judea and Samaria," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, October 2007).

Chapter 6 explored the development of a new iteration of direct deterrence-by-punishment of Hamas once it gained control of the Gaza Strip. Prior to that, deterrence-by-punishment against Hamas was difficult due to a lack of assets that could be targeted outside of its members themselves, which often led to escalation if carried out during a period of relative calm. With Hamas responsible for the entire Gaza Strip, this changed and, in many ways, deterrence became more straightforward as it began to resemble the conventional deterrence of a neighbouring state. Proportional reprisals for smaller breaches of peace, like occasional rocket fire landing in an unpopulated area, helped to maintain deterrence by confirming to Hamas that Israel was still resolved to fight back. Despite this seeming simplicity, however, peace has not been constant and Israel has felt the need to fight three wars in Gaza since 2007—hardly a promising pattern for the indefinite future.

After Hamas's takeover of Gaza, Israel tried both to compel a change of the status quo (encourage Gazans eventually to eject Hamas from power) and maintain it (i.e. maintaining the prevailing calm). Israel and Egypt's blockade of Gaza, as well as financial sanctions on Hamas put in place by several governments, meant the status quo in Gaza became steadily less acceptable. Mohamed Abdalfatah, Director of International Cooperation for the Municipality of Gaza, described the mood in Gaza City at the end of 2008, before Cast Lead. He said things were so bad that people wanted *any* change. 'There was a slow suffering in August, September, October and you thought "let it come!"'⁶ In addition to this 'push factor' put in place largely by Israel, Hamas's 'new' tactic of launching rockets and mortars into Israel was not clearly covered by Israel's 'red lines', constituting a hole in its deterrence and thus a 'pull' factor failing to discourage rocket launches. Israel had previously been more concerned with suicide

6 Mohammed Abdalfatah, Author interview, in person, March 13, 2014.

attacks and gave rocket launches less attention. Israel used Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9 to establish a new status quo in its relationship with Hamas, but it has continued to undervalue 'push factors' like a status quo increasingly unacceptable to Gazan residents and Hamas and the effects these can have on the medium-term stability of deterrence.

Chapter 6 showed that, after Operation Cast Lead, Hamas and Israel were committed to maintaining the calm throughout the remainder of 2009 and all of 2010. Comments by Hamas leaders during that time lead to the conclusion that Hamas feared an Israeli response and that this deterred it from violence. Its active prevention and prosecution of rocket launches by other groups in the Gaza Strip is additional evidence of this. Nevertheless, throughout 2011 and 2012, there were signs that Hamas was less attached to the status quo. This is in part because Gazan opinion favoured some sort of action on Hamas's part, particularly when Mahmoud Abbas was seen negotiating with Israel with American involvement and taking action with UN institutions (a 'push' factor undermining stability and encouraging Hamas to take action). Hamas had also improved its capabilities during this time and gained confidence (a 'pull' factor undermining the credibility of Israel's deterrent and making Hamas less hesitant to use force). At the same time as Hamas's responses showed less commitment to the status quo, Israel's did, too. As Hamas's capabilities improved, there was also a drive for Israel to strike at those capabilities even if such pre-emptive action would undermine stability and lead to escalation. Other armed groups in Gaza were also restive, with the PFLP, in particular, making headlines with attacks on Israelis. The deterrence situation was thus becoming less stable. Each attack, seen now by those launching them on both sides as a response to previous attacks, now created a new status quo with a higher level of

violence. Returning to a status quo of lower violence now required both sides to back down publicly and appear to be compelled to do so. Both sides were instead eventually content to escalate to war. This illustrates once again the reprisal risk: that even 'proportionate' responses seen as within the 'rules of the game' can establish a new, unacceptable status quo should they multiply, continually undermining stability. The only solution to this conundrum is to attempt to increase the stability and desirability of the original, more peaceful status quo (i.e. to focus on reducing the 'push' factors that lead an opponent to violence in the first place).

Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012 was followed by another period of quiet. Crucially, however, this period was shorter than the one that preceded it, which raises serious questions about the future of Israel's deterrence of Hamas. The abduction and murder of three Israeli teens by a Hebron-based Hamas cell sparked a heavy-handed response from Israel, which in turn led to protest rocket launches from groups in Gaza other than Hamas. We may never be certain about what Hamas's aims in the kidnapping were, if it even had any, or if different autonomous parts of Hamas simply sometimes operate at cross purposes. What is clear from this, however, is the difficulty of calibrating responses to actions by such a group. It is also clear that Hamas was once again facing a worsening situation on the ground in Gaza due to the intensified isolation of the Strip, isolation abroad, and weakness at home intense enough for it to seek a unity deal with the PA. A final point of clarity is that Hamas was stronger militarily than ever before, killing far more Israeli soldiers during Operation Protective Edge in 2014 than in both the previous conflicts with Israel combined (see figure 7.3) and even managing temporarily to cut off many commercial flights between Israel and the rest of the world. Its political weakness and isolation and its military strength were a dangerous cocktail

of push and pull factors. The events of 2014 illustrate a now-familiar pattern of an accumulation of retaliatory actions from both sides that eventually establish a new status quo acceptable to neither and yet also one from which neither side is willing to back down, all but requiring a round of heavy violence.

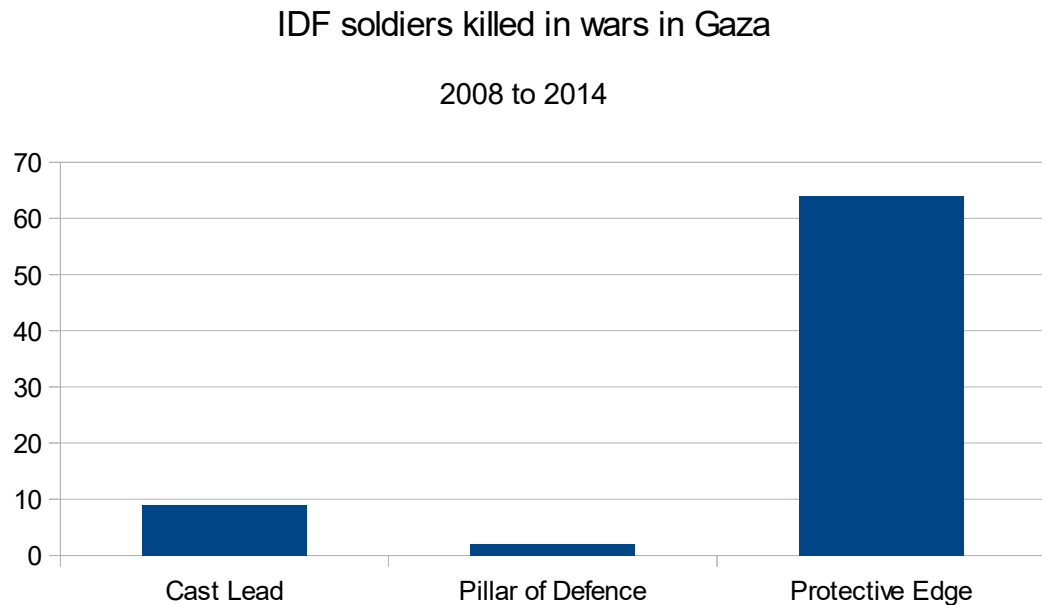


Figure 7.3: Nearly six times as many Israeli soldiers died during the most recent operation than during Israel's first two combined (including several killed through infiltrations into Israeli territory through Hamas-built tunnels).⁷

7.2 Beyond deterrence? Cumulative deterrence and conflict resolution between Israel and Hamas

Is deterrence an end in itself for Israel in dealing with Hamas? Has a conflict

⁷ "IDF Soldiers Killed in Operation Cast Lead," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, January 8, 2009, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/IDF_soldiers_killed_Operation_Cast_Lead.aspx; "Israel under Fire-November 2012," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, November 22, 2012, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Israel_under_fire-November_2012.aspx; "Operation Protective Edge: Israel under Fire - IDF Responds," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 26, 2014, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Rise-in-rocket-fire-from-Gaza-3-Jul-2014.aspx>.

management tactic morphed into a *de facto* substitute for a conflict resolution strategy? Several Israeli scholars and even government officials have claimed Israel has no strategy, either specifically towards Hamas or towards the Palestinians in general. Harel Chorev, head of the Network Analysis desk in the Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University, argues that Israel has displayed a ‘sheer lack of strategy’ towards Hamas since 2007.⁸ In 2014, Israel’s then Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman insisted ‘Every minister in the government has a strategy, but the Israeli government has no strategy’.⁹ Just a few days ago, Major-General Yom-Tov Samia, a former commander of the IDF’s Southern Command, joined the chorus, saying the ‘state of Israel has no serious, deep and long-term strategy’.¹⁰ Avraham Shalom, a former head of Shin Bet, suggests this has long been the case. Referring to the period after Israel’s occupation of the West Bank in 1967, he remarked: ‘All in all, we gained control over the war on terror. We kept it on a low flame so the country could do what it wanted. That’s important, but it didn’t solve the problem of the occupation. What it did was, instead of 20 attacks a week, there were 20 a year. [...] There was no strategy, just tactics.’¹¹

Two interviews in which this came up also suggested that Israel may be pursuing deterrence as a default. When asked if Israel had an overall strategy ‘beyond deterrence’ for ending the conflict with Hamas, one expert responded ‘you live day by day’. The interviewee did illuminate Israel’s policy of ‘cumulative deterrence’, explaining that after each round of escalation, Israel would set the ‘red lines’, the maximum level of violence it would tolerate, at a lower level than the last, thus reducing the overall level

8 Harel Chorev, “The Road to Operation Protective Edge: Gaps in Strategic Perception,” trans. Yvette Shumacher, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 3 (January 2014): 9–24, doi:10.1080/23739770.2014.11446599.

9 Tova Dvorin, “Liberman Insists ‘the Israeli Government Has No Strategy,’” *Arutz Sheva*, June 2, 2014, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181313>.

10 Ari Yashar, “Ex-IDF Southern Commander: Israel Has No Strategy,” *News, Arutz Sheva*, (May 8, 2016), <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/211933>.

11 Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*, DVD, Documentary, (2013).

of violence over time.¹² Senior Israeli analyst Gil Murciano related to the author then Defense Minister Ehud Barak's strategy for Israel's wars in Gaza. It consisted of attempting to lengthen the gaps between wars over time.¹³ This sounds very much like a strategy of deterrence, with the end aim being a Hamas deterred from violence altogether.¹⁴ This also describes almost perfectly Jansson's idea of a 'cycle of deterrence expansion and failure' that risks 'making bolstering deterrence an end in itself'.¹⁵ If the outcome were an eventual end to violence, however, why would this be objectionable? Can cumulative deterrence perhaps end the violence on its own if pursued indefinitely?

The problem is that it is doubtful whether deterrence can be sustained long enough to achieve that goal. Since Protective Edge, the Gaza border has returned mostly to calm. To say that Hamas can currently be deterred from attacking Israel is not to say that it is not simultaneously increasing both its defensive and offensive capabilities, however, perhaps in the hope of overcoming Israel's deterrent. Israel currently has the ability and credibility to threaten Hamas enough that deterrence can probably be maintained and, when necessary, restored via compellence for the time being. There is no guarantee that this will go on indefinitely. Furthermore, as Daniel Byman points out: Hamas does not have to *win* a war against Israel in order for Israel's deterrence to be severely damaged and to profit from a perceived victory. This is because 'Hamas can tolerate casualties more than Israel can and its people do not expect them to inflict equal damage.'¹⁶ Once deterrence is eroded, and Hamas gains a greater ability to deter Israel,

12 Shmuel Bar, Author interview in person, February 27, 2013.

13 Gil Murciano, Author interview via Skype, February 4, 2014.

14 In his book, current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presents a plan for a "durable peace" that essentially involves maintaining the status quo until the Palestinians agree to autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza and decide against independence. See: Binyamin Netanyahu, *A Durable Peace: Israel and Its Place among the Nations* (New York: Warner Books, 2000), chap. 8.

15 Mark Jansson, "Seeing Deterrence through the Lens of Conflict Resolution," in *Panel 1 - Nuclear Strategy for the Changing Security Environment* (2010 Capstone Conference, OFFUTT AFB, NE, USA: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010), 59–70.

16 Daniel Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 200.

the balance of power could begin to shift, even if Hamas never gains anything like military parity with Israel. Judging deterrence to be possible as long as Israel's raw military capabilities are greater than those of Hamas may therefore be overly optimistic.

Hamas has indeed improved its overall capabilities, as evidenced by the range of its rockets and its ability now to target Ben-Gurion Airport. In addition, there was evidence of a change in tactics in the last round. The most recent Gaza war was also the most deadly for Israel (see figure 7.3 above). A number of deadly attacks came as the result of Hamas militants' infiltration into Israel via Hamas's many 'attack tunnels' under the border, which is why destroying such tunnels featured so prominently among Israel's goals in Operation Protective Edge in 2014.¹⁷ In addition, since the war ended, there have been a number of 'lone wolf' attacks within Israel, particularly in Jerusalem. Although only one of the attackers is known to have been a member of Hamas, Hamas has praised such attacks and has reportedly been expanding a network of terror cells within the West Bank.¹⁸ These developments all suggest Hamas is adding new tactics in addition to its rocket arsenal, which is increasingly subject to interception by Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system. All this means that it is not yet possible to conclude that cumulative deterrence will continue to lead to ever-lower levels of violence, though

17 "Israel Launches Ground Operation in Gaza," *Agence France Presse -- English*, July 17, 2014; For examples of tunnel use: "Gun Battle Kills 10 Gaza Militants, 4 Israeli Soldiers," *Agence France Presse*, July 21, 2014; Yaakov Lappin, "7 Soldiers Killed Foiling Hamas Infiltration. Terrorist Squad Enters Israel via Tunnel, Fires on IDF Jeep with Anti-Tank Missile. Senior Source: Hamas Planned to Carry out Many Attacks through Tunnels," *Jerusalem Post*, July 22, 2014, sec. News; Yaakov Lappin, "5 Soldiers Killed as Another Cease-Fire Crumbles. Terror Cell Infiltrates via Tunnel to Nahal Oz Area, Troops Kill Attacker. IDF: We Need Another Week to Do Away with Remaining Hamas Tunnels," *Jerusalem Post*, July 29, 2014, sec. News.

18 David Muir, "Terror Attack; Hit and Run in Bethlehem," TV News Transcript, *World News Tonight with David Muir* (New York: ABC News, November 5, 2014), <http://www.nexis.com/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=5DJ4-89H1-JC85-K480&csi=8277,10903,10911,166768,138211,10939,138620&oc=00240&perma=true>; "Hamas, Islamic Jihad Hail Jerusalem Synagogue Attack," *Agence France Presse*, November 18, 2014; Ben Hartman, "Hit and Run That Injured 3 Soldiers Deemed Terror Strike. Driver Confesses to Being Hamas Member, Planning Attack," *Jerusalem Post*, November 21, 2014, sec. News; Yaakov Lappin, "Shin Bet Foils Hamas Attack at Jerusalem Soccer Stadium. Turkey-Based Terrorists Also Planned to Send Car Bombs into Israel, Strike Light Rail in Capital, Kidnap Israelis," *Jerusalem Post*, November 28, 2014, sec. News.

the overall trend has certainly been downward since 2002.

Israel has ways of dealing with most, if not all, of these issues. Its attempt to prevent tunnel building by prohibiting construction materials from entering Gaza has clearly failed: an additional argument for the blockade that has not stood the test of reality. Israel has a booming tech industry, however, and has already developed new tunnel detection equipment that it is putting into operation near Gaza.¹⁹ Israel could therefore allow conditions in Gaza to improve, for example by allowing construction materials in (the blocking of which did not prevent tunnel building but did hinder reconstruction efforts), while destroying tunnels using this new equipment, even as it continues to block advanced rocket shipments into Gaza as best it can. Egypt's crackdown on smuggling between it and Gaza provides Israel a golden opportunity to ease the blockade while maintaining control of what goes in and out. Israel has also long shown it has the capacity to keep a lid on terrorism emanating from the West Bank; settlements have extensive security provisions and the security barrier continues to operate as it has since 2004. Lone wolf attacks, especially those originating from within Israel proper and potentially from Israeli citizens, are more difficult to detect ahead of time but are also unlikely to become a threat on the level seen during the era of suicide bombing. The consequences for Israeli society of an intensified us-versus-them situation developing within its borders, however, are disturbing and would be extremely damaging, including in the eyes of Israel's foreign allies. This brings us to another, potentially more harmful, threat to Israel: international action against it and international isolation of it.

Kobi Michael, former Deputy Director and head of the Palestinian desk at

¹⁹ Daniel Bernstein, "Israel Deploying Revolutionary Anti-Tunnel System on Gaza Border," *The Times of Israel*, April 16, 2015, Online edition, sec. Israel & the Region, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/tunnel-detection-system-to-be-deployed-on-gaza-border/>.

Israel's Ministry for Strategic Affairs, sums up his view of the current Palestinian strategy: A Third Intifada is very unlikely. The Palestinians now accept that this would not achieve their goals. Instead, they are using a different strategy

led by Abu Mazen [Abbas]. And this is the idea of delegitimizing the State of Israel, trying to isolate the State of Israel, trying to sabotage the strategic relations between Israel and the United States, and using the international arena, international institutions, human rights discourse, the *zeitgeist*, as we say, in order to push Israel to the corner, ...gain some political points, and ...reach some political and even strategic achievements that could [otherwise] have been gained by negotiation with Israel. ...they think that by using this unilateral strategy in the international arena, they can reach a very similar result [to negotiations with Israel] without paying the price. They think, and I think that they have some very good reasons to think so, that they [have] the upper hand. And therefore they prefer this strategy. In their eyes... this is a sort of deterrence towards Israel. ...So, eventually Israel as a state can be deterred, in this way or another, by a non-state actor. Because a non-state actor can use the international community and create a sort of political pressure on the State of Israel and in this regard can create a sort of... political deterrence, international deterrence, towards Israel. [...] If it prevents Israel from doing some strategic moves... that have some impact on the non-state actor, then it is deterrence!²⁰

At the same time, he believes that this is, on the whole, a strategic achievement for Israel:

The Palestinian mainstream actually abandoned terrorism in the sense of at least the most serious type of terrorism that we knew, the most dangerous one, which is the suicide bombers. And in this regard, this is a huge achievement for the IDF and for the State of Israel. And... this is due even to the cooperation between the Israeli security apparatuses and the Palestinian security apparatuses, due to the understanding with the Palestinians that terrorism is not good for them, that terrorism actually enhances the capabilities of Israel to use its advantages towards the Palestinians because it creates... legitimacy for using military force. [...] And in this regard, this is an achievement and even a strategic achievement. On the other hand, we have to understand that... in any context, [once] you have... achieved a strategic achievement, the environment has [changed]... and you will have to adapt yourself. ...you have to be able to tackle the new challenges that [are] created in the environment that you have influenced by your achievements.²¹

This is reminiscent of an argument made previously by another interviewee familiar with Israel's security policy:

²⁰ Kobi Michael, Author Interview in person, June 10, 2014.

²¹ Ibid.

[With] every round of violence conducted by Israel with Hamas, from one to another, Israel's manoeuvrability is being limited. It could do whatever it wanted in [Operation] Cast Lead, it could actually invade, it could actually use ground forces and so on. Then there was [the] Goldstone [Report] afterwards, there were political and international pressures, its manoeuvrability was actually limited. And in the next operation, it could not use the same measures that it could use in Cast Lead. So Hamas understands that using political pressure... actually limits Israel's ability to use measures and therefore limits Israel's ability to deter!²²

Israel's reputation abroad is thus becoming a security liability. The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has succeeded in encouraging many universities in the West to halt cooperation with universities in Israel and some churches, including the US Presbyterian Church and the World Council of Churches, have pulled investments out of Israeli companies or US companies they view as profiting from Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.²³ In October 2014, Sweden became the second Western country after Iceland to recognize a Palestinian state.²⁴ The same month, the UK Parliament passed a symbolic motion to 'recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel'.²⁵ Although recognition is a decision made by government ministers alone and not by parliament, the fact that the motion received such support, particularly among Labour MPs, suggests that Britain could one day recognize a Palestinian State regardless of Israel's objections. In April 2015, US Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman warned: 'If the new Israeli government is seen to be stepping back from its commitment to a two-state solution that will make our job

22 Author interview with Israeli senior analyst, Skype, February 6, 2013.

23 Times of Israel Staff, Rebecca Shimon Stoll, and Associated Press, "'We Cannot Profit from the Destruction of Homes and Lives,' Presbyterians Say," *The Times of Israel*, June 21, 2014, sec. Israel & the Region, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/we-cannot-profit-from-the-destruction-of-homes-and-lives-presbyterians-say/>; "ADL Dismayed By World Council of Churches Decision to Pursue Divestment As Means to Punish Israel," *Anti-Defamation League*, February 22, 2005, http://archive.adl.org/presrele/chjew_31/4652_31.html#.VUjYjvxVhBE.

24 "Sweden and the Middle East: Clean Hands, Fewer Friends," *The Economist*, March 28, 2015, Online edition, sec. Europe, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21647357-who-could-take-offence-over-speech-womens-rights-arab-league-clean-hands-fewer-friends>.

25 "MPs Back Palestinian Statehood alongside Israel," *BBC News*, October 14, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-29596822>.

in the international arena much tougher... it will be harder for us to prevent internationalizing the conflict’—a veiled threat not to veto UN resolutions Israel dislikes.²⁶ This chimes with the fact that, although Americans overall remain considerably more sympathetic to Israel than to the Palestinians, a plurality of those polled (45%) would not stand in the way of a Security Council resolution establishing a Palestinian state.²⁷ ‘Internationalizing’ the conflict thus seems quite plausible in the medium and perhaps even short term. In fact, some of this has already begun. Palestine became a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in April 2015. The ICC is currently examining whether criteria have been met for the Court to investigate Israel for crimes allegedly committed in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.²⁸ Any future rulings against Israel or its leaders could make it more difficult for those leaders to travel abroad and would damage Israel’s legitimacy abroad, providing further impetus for campaigns to boycott Israeli goods or levy sanctions against it, even if the US opposed and vetoed such efforts. A loss of support for Israel abroad, particularly in the US, but also in Europe, could be a strategic-level risk for Israel. Its support abroad, in turn, so far remains predicated on a commitment to the two-state solution, meaning that such a commitment is vital to Israel’s security.

Is deterrence itself hindering the search for alternatives? Israel finds itself in a continuous state of Patrick Morgan’s immediate deterrence, with its focus on constant possible crises with an opportunistic opponent. He points out that this can lead its adherents ‘to emphasize how alternative approaches [to peace] could damage

26 Barak Ravid, “U.S.: It Will Be Hard to Support Israel in UN If It Steps Back from Two-State Solution,” *Haaretz*, April 27, 2015, sec. Diplomacy and Defense, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.653819>.

27 “American Views on Palestinian Statehood,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, December 2014, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/popalhome.html>.

28 “Palestinians Formally Join International Criminal Court,” *BBC News*, April 1, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-32144186>.

[deterrence]’.²⁹ This means that, if Israel cannot escape a constant sense of crisis in its conflict with Hamas, it may see other avenues towards managing conflict, like some form of political process, blocked because of their possible damage to Israel’s deterrent posture. One possible way around this would be for Israel to offer concessions when the Gaza border is peaceful and refuse them when it is not. Concessions given from strength should not damage deterrence the way those given after Pillar of Defence did, for instance, when they appeared to be gains Hamas won by attacking Israel (thus undermining Israel’s credibility rather than bolstering stability, as they could have done were they given unilaterally during a period of calm).³⁰

Can Israel move beyond deterrence or add peace ‘on top of it’ while improving stability and security? This will depend on numerous factors and how Israel responds to them. One way in which deterrence itself could be making agreeing on a final status between Israelis and Palestinians more difficult is the mere fact of the separation of the two peoples via the West Bank barrier. Up until the mid-1990s, Israelis and Palestinians could travel freely throughout both Israel and the Palestinian territories. Since the Oslo Accords, this has changed. There is still significant interaction between the two, however. A recent report by Israel’s central bank stated that the number of Palestinians working in Israel has doubled to about 92,000 in the last four years.³¹ What’s more, Israelis can travel throughout much of the West Bank as much of it lies in Area C, which

29 Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 89 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.

30 One expert interviewed expressed dismay at the results of Pillar of Defense, after which he claimed Hamas had gained considerable concessions from Israel. In a seminar at King’s College London, another expert expressed the need for a “political horizon” now in order to prevent further outbreaks of Palestinian violence. Expert on Israeli policy, Author interview in person, January 31, 2013; Gil Messing, “Seeking No War - Achieving No Peace: How Israel and the Palestinian Authority Could Maintain Sustainable Non-Violent Relations” (Maintaining Regional Security in the Middle East seminar, London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), 2013).

31 Moti Bassok, “Number of Palestinians Working in Israel Doubled over Four Years, Central Bank Says - Business - Israel News | Haaretz,” *Haaretz*, March 15, 2015, sec. Business, <http://www.haaretz.com/business/.premium-1.645266>.

is subject to exclusive Israeli jurisdiction. This author's Palestinian guide mentioned that many Palestinians work in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. It is therefore not as if the two sides do not regularly encounter each other or know what is at stake.

In reality, it is not overconfidence in Israel's deterrent power, and thus vehement arguments in favour of maintaining it, that are hindering a peace deal. The general argument is not that Israel cannot make peace because doing so would weaken deterrence. Instead, it is that the withdrawal from Gaza, with its resultant rocket fire and three wars, has not improved security. It thus follows that withdrawal from the West Bank should not be tried because it would produce the same result only worse, as so much of Israel's population would be located close to the new border. This is an argument sceptical of deterrence; that it does not work well enough and cannot be relied upon for Israel's security in the future if a Palestinian state were established in the West Bank. It is therefore not an argument that negotiating would weaken deterrence. Improving deterrence therefore might make a peace deal more palatable rather than less by convincing the Israeli public that it could be relied upon to provide them security after a Palestinian state was formed. Israelis are unlikely to support a peace deal until a majority of them are convinced that their security would be assured. Israel may be able to do this.

The withdrawal from Gaza may not have been the security blunder it is seen to be, or at least, that might one day be the case. As Kobi Michael says:

[S]ometimes we need a sort of perspective.... [For example, in] August 2006, I wrote [a newspaper article....] [I]t was... less than two months after the second Lebanon war, [which, as] you know, at first was perceived in Israel as a strategic failure.... And there was huge criticism in Israel and abroad about the failure of the IDF to achieve the strategic goals and the failure of the... Israeli government to define the right strategic goals... and so on. ...the title of [my] article was 'Maybe we won'.... And I wrote there that we need perspective of time in order to understand what are the real ramifications... and if there are some achievements. ...Now we are almost eight years

after the war and I think that, from the strategic point of view, this is a huge success. Look how Hezbollah is deterred! I would say that, in the last three years after the upheaval there in Syria, Hezbollah is pretty occupied there and they have some other problems as well, but they are very, very cautious. [...] And Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, is still in the bunker, eight years after the war. [He] doesn't dare to come out from this bunker! So, from the... pure military point of view, there were some... failures or mistakes... in the campaign itself, but analysing it from the strategic point of view and having the historic perspective of seven or eight years after the war, this is a huge success!³²

Israel may be able to achieve greater deterrent stability closer to that of Hezbollah. Like the United States during the Cold War, Israel has worried about its credibility and taken actions to shore it up. As shown in the last chapter, part of the reason for Israel's ground invasion into Gaza during Operation Cast Lead was to show Hamas that it was willing to put boots on the ground. This may have been justified in that particular case, but deterrence theorists have long warned that an excessive focus on credibility can undermine stability, making deterrence less reliable. In the nuclear-based conflict of the Cold War, stability was enhanced through arms control agreements designed to prevent either side from gaining a strategic advantage. This made the status quo easier to accept by removing the need to try to race ahead of the opponent (i.e. it removed 'push factors'). For its part, Israel could increase the stability of its deterrence of Hamas by improving the status quo in Gaza, thereby reducing pressure on Hamas to attack Israel. Hezbollah also vows to 'liberate the 1948 borders of Palestine' and send any Jews that survived that war of liberation 'back to Germany, or wherever they came from'. 'Sayyid Nasrallah himself told a conference held in Tehran [in 2001] that "we all have an extraordinary historic opportunity to finish off the entire cancerous Zionist project."³³ Sharp-eyed observers will have noted, however, that Israel's border with Lebanon has been quieter than its border with Gaza since 2007. A key difference is that

³² Michael, interview.

³³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God - The New Yorker," *The New Yorker*, October 14, 2002, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/10/14/in-the-party-of-god?currentPage=4>.

Israel does not threaten Hezbollah's continued existence or its effective control of a large portion of southern Lebanon through occasional talk of a need to re-occupy territory there, nor is Hezbollah's territory subject to a strict economic blockade. The status quo is comfortable for Hezbollah, at least for now, and threats to it do not emanate primarily from Israel. If the same could be said for Hamas, it is likely the Gaza border would be quieter as well.

Deterrence can do little to counter another oft-heard argument: that there is no partner with whom Israel can negotiate. Negotiating with Hamas, however, may not be necessary: If Gaza were more stable, for example after the declaration of a long-term *hudna*, Israel might be able to make peace with the PA, with Gaza joining a new Palestinian state later, once its de facto rulers allow this. The real stumbling blocks for peace are, as always, the questions of Jerusalem, the right of return, settlements, the Jordan Valley, and demilitarization. Agreement on these issues is at least theoretically possible, but would require sacrifices that will only be made if they are seen to be *worth it*. This points to a way in which deterrence may have helped stall negotiations: The status quo is acceptable enough to Israelis, and perhaps the PA leadership as well, that they do not see an urgent need to make concessions. Moreover, given the lessons Israelis have drawn (correctly or not) from the withdrawal from Gaza, they are not convinced these concessions would be worth making. Finally, the Israeli politician who pulls Israel out of the West Bank would not only face political threats, but threats to his or her physical safety. Former Shin Bet Head Carmi Gillon has said 'I believe that we'll see another political assassination surrounding the withdrawal from the West Bank. It will come from every direction, mainly from the rabbis, because the rabbis have no reason to learn any lesson. As far as the extremist rabbis are concerned, the system

proved itself.' That is, the assassination of Rabin succeeded in halting the peace process and preventing a withdrawal from the West Bank.³⁴

This suggests Israel may not enthusiastically take up negotiations with the Palestinians again until its citizens again see this as a path to a better future not just in the long term, but also in the short to medium term. The historian of Israel Ahron Bregman argues that, without the First Intifada, Israel would never have embarked on the Oslo Accords.³⁵ The violence of the First Intifada showed that the occupation was not free of charge. Violence from Gaza today, however, has the opposite effect, as it serves to show that withdrawing from formerly held land does not guarantee security and has led Israelis to question the wisdom of further concessions. Israel faces multiple threats and changes in the future that may make the status quo, which has seemed comfortable enough for now, untenable, however. These threats not only effect the status quo, but the future of Israel's deterrence of Hamas and potential future adversaries. That deterrence is by no means guaranteed.

The good news is thus that deterrence is not, by itself, furthering an antagonistic relationship with Hamas that would otherwise be less so. It is therefore not a hindrance to peace. In fact, the instability of the deterrence of Hamas may instead be a stumbling block. This thesis has argued that improving conditions in Gaza could be the key to improving stability and security. For deterrence to work, Gazans would need to accept the status quo. The worsening situation in Gaza thus undermines deterrence and makes outbreaks of violence more likely. Several threats remain beyond this, however, and improving conditions in Gaza is not risk free.

With each round of violence between Israel and Hamas, Hamas has improved its

34 Carmi Gillon, interviewed in Moreh, *The Gatekeepers*.

35 Ahron Bregman, *Cursed Victory: A History of Israel and the Occupied Territories*, Kindle (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 306.

capabilities. Figure 7.3 above showed that Israel's wars in Gaza may be getting more costly in terms of soldiers' lives, while 7.4 shows that 2014 was the deadliest year for Israelis with regard to Hamas since the Second Intifada. Given Israel's continued overpowering strength and the success and expansion of its missile defence systems, it seems unlikely that rising Hamas capabilities by themselves will pose a strategic threat to Israel in the foreseeable future, but they might make Israeli leaders more reluctant to invade Gaza and otherwise respond to Hamas, slowly eroding Israel's ability to issue credible deterrent threats. Missile defence systems are expensive and can always be overwhelmed by a barrage of hundreds of (cheap) rockets. Hamas's ability to strike near Ben-Gurion airport, by far Israel's most important, is therefore worrying. Asher Susser, Director of the Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University, points to another problem: 'According to conventional wisdom, there is a built-in asymmetry in favor of Israel in its relationship with the Palestinians. This asymmetry stems from the fact that Israel is immeasurably superior to the Palestinians in all components of power: military, political, economic, technological and so on. However, the more critical asymmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian context actually favors the Palestinians in the areas of demography and international legitimacy, where time is clearly working for them.'³⁶ Israel has time and again showed it has the resolve to strike back when attacked, so it is this author's conclusion that rising Hamas capabilities would not by themselves reduce Israel's will to strike back, but they will make doing so more costly in blood and treasure and, together, with the factors in the Palestinians' favour highlighted by Susser, would lead to increasing international criticism and the risk of sanctions. It is likely Israelis would then begin to wonder if there might be

36 Asher Susser, "Israel, the Arabs and Palestine: Facing Crucial Decisions," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 1, no. 1 (January 2006): 57–67, doi:10.1080/23739770.2006.11446240.

another way out.

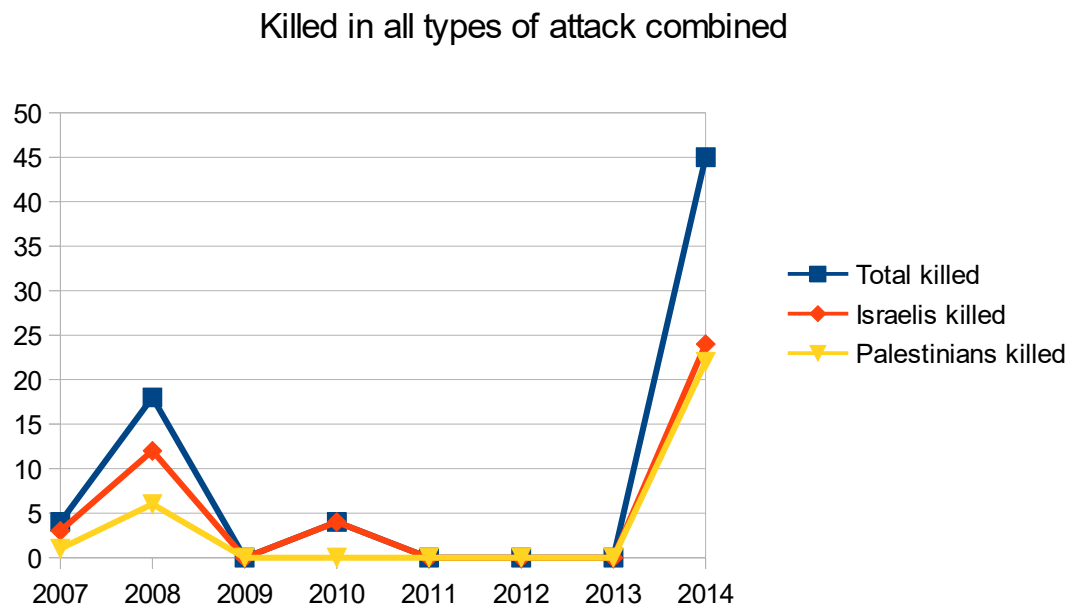


Figure 7.4: This shows 2014 was the deadliest year for Israelis since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. In 2014, nearly as many Palestinian militants died during attacks on Israelis as Israelis (with many more in some cases), reflecting the increased danger of close-range shooting attacks. Note: These statistics do not include battles taking place during Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip as they are meant to reflect Hamas-initiated terror attacks. This recent change in tactics has made this distinction somewhat less clear-cut, however.³⁷

7.3 The only game in town? Israel and the two-state solution

These threats show that Israel should not be complacent. The threat of international isolation also shows that military superiority and deterrence alone are not a guarantee of security. Though Israel is surely right that many will hate it no matter what it does, changing the policies that most irritate the Europeans and Americans (above all continued settlement construction) would help. This isolation might also push Israel to

³⁷ Charles Kirchofer, "Database of Hamas Terror Attacks," *Database of Hamas Terror Attacks*, January 2015, www.hamasterrordatabase.com.

accept a real peace deal with the Palestinians, but the terms of such a deal could be less favourable than the terms during previous attempts. Ahron Bregman Israel would otherwise not conclude a deal with the Palestinians: 'for peace negotiations to resume in a meaningful way the international community, and particularly the US, will have to be tough with Israel and when necessary bribe it into compromise. If the past four decades have proved anything, it is that the Israelis will not give up the occupied territories easily.'³⁸ Israel will likely come under ever increasing pressure to make some kind of deal, and a permanent settlement and a two-state solution are still the only game in town as far as international legitimacy is concerned. As Asher Susser explains, demographic changes (the increase in the size of the Palestinian population relative to the Jewish one in Israel and the West Bank and Jerusalem) mean that 'the State of Israel will not be able to maintain itself, within these boundaries, in the long run, as the state of the Jewish people, which by definition requires a solid, longstanding, Jewish majority. Therefore, the continuation of the status quo is bound to ensure the failure of Zionism and its historical *raison d'être*. Moreover, the continuation of the status quo and the perpetuation of Israel's occupation of millions of Palestinians are constantly eroding Israel's international legitimacy. They also provide the justification for a significant body of world opinion to support the Palestinians' use of force against Israel. This combined erosion of both Israel's demographic power and its international legitimacy is turning the time factor against Israel as well.'³⁹ Moreover, for all the difficulties inherent in agreeing to a two-state solution, it is neigh impossible to see how a one-state solution could satisfy the needs of both Israelis and Palestinians.

One possibility for progressing on a final status deal could be to make peace

³⁸ Bregman, *Cursed Victory*, 307.

³⁹ Susser, "Israel, the Arabs and Palestine."

with the PA even without Gaza. A three-state solution, with Gaza remaining a separate, quasi-state is not ideal, but from the perspective of Israel's legitimacy in foreign eyes, and therefore ultimately for its security, it would be better than the status quo. A state in the West Bank with the withdrawal of most of Israel's isolated settlements, coupled with a conditional end to the blockade, would ease most of the issues that most concern Israel's allies in Europe and America as well as several of those that most anger Palestinians—and it would not necessarily even require direct negotiation with Hamas, though Hamas's at least tacit acceptance would be key. Israel could continue deterring both 'states' separately. Furthermore, Gaza would no longer be seen as an anti-Israel cause but an example of Hamas preventing Palestinian unity, severely damaging its legitimacy and discouraging Arab governments from supporting it. If Israel made peace with the PA and a prosperous independent Palestinian state formed in the West Bank, Gazans would eventually demand to join it. Last summer's unity deal suggested Hamas might be willing to surrender at least some control of the Gaza Strip. If it lost elections and a referendum went ahead that ratified a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, this might grant the PA the legitimacy to re-take Gaza, including by force if necessary.

7.4 The benefits and limitations of deterrence

It is, of course, up to Israelis and Palestinians to decide the path their intertwined fates take. The scenario just proposed is speculative and hypothetical, but the assessment of the prevailing strategic conditions for Israel and Hamas is not. The evidence suggests that Israel can maintain deterrence for now and even bolster it by unilaterally easing the blockade of Gaza during a period of calm while continuing to

prove its willingness to do whatever it deems necessary to combat Hamas during periods of violence. Israelis have concluded that the withdrawal from Gaza has not made them safer because the deterrence of Hamas is not reliable enough. If their conclusion is correct, and deterrence cannot be improved, this security concern represents a major stumbling block in the way of any territorial agreement. Enhancing deterrence would be beneficial in its own right, but it would also not stand in the way of a peace deal with the PA and might even aid it if it increased Israelis' security and confidence in their future. Such a peace deal would possibly necessitate the direct deterrence of the new State of Palestine, as not all Palestinians would be content with the new territorial status quo. As Uri Resnick argues, however: 'inter-state territorial conflicts tend to be shorter than conflicts involving a non-state entity. Together with the fact that most cases of independence in the last 200 years have resulted in basically amicable relations between predecessor and successor states, this seems to suggest that the creation of a Palestinian state will be beneficial, even if it does not completely resolve all territorial claims.'⁴⁰ Deterring violence from a new Palestinian state would require a return to the indirect deterrence of Hamas and many of the difficulties entailed in this that were covered in chapter 4, but with a crucial difference: The relationship in chapter 4 broke down in part due to a lack of progress on a Palestinian state. With that major issue removed, security cooperation between Israel and a new Palestinian state would likely be smoother and more stable.

The political challenges involved in achieving an agreement with the Palestinians that both sides accept have of course not diminished and have probably intensified as Israel's West Bank settlements have spread. The long-term threats Israel

⁴⁰ Uri Resnick, "Territorial Disputes: Perspectives on the Israeli—Palestinian Conflict," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 3 (January 2008): 87–97, doi:10.1080/23739770.2008.11446334.

faces suggest that it will not be able to rely on deterrence indefinitely and that cumulative deterrence will not one day produce Palestinian acquiescence to the current situation of limited autonomy in a territory dotted with settlements. Deterrence is not a hindrance to peace and may in fact help it, but the long-standing challenges to achieving it remain regardless and deterrence is at best of limited use in resolving them. Leaders of other states dealing with non-state actors would do well to keep that fact in mind and keep a close watch on push and pull factors and the timing of concessions and reprisals. If the case of Israel and Hamas shows us anything, it is the success that deterrence can have, but also the fragility of the fine balance that deterrers must strike and the fact that deterrence alone cannot bring lasting peace.

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